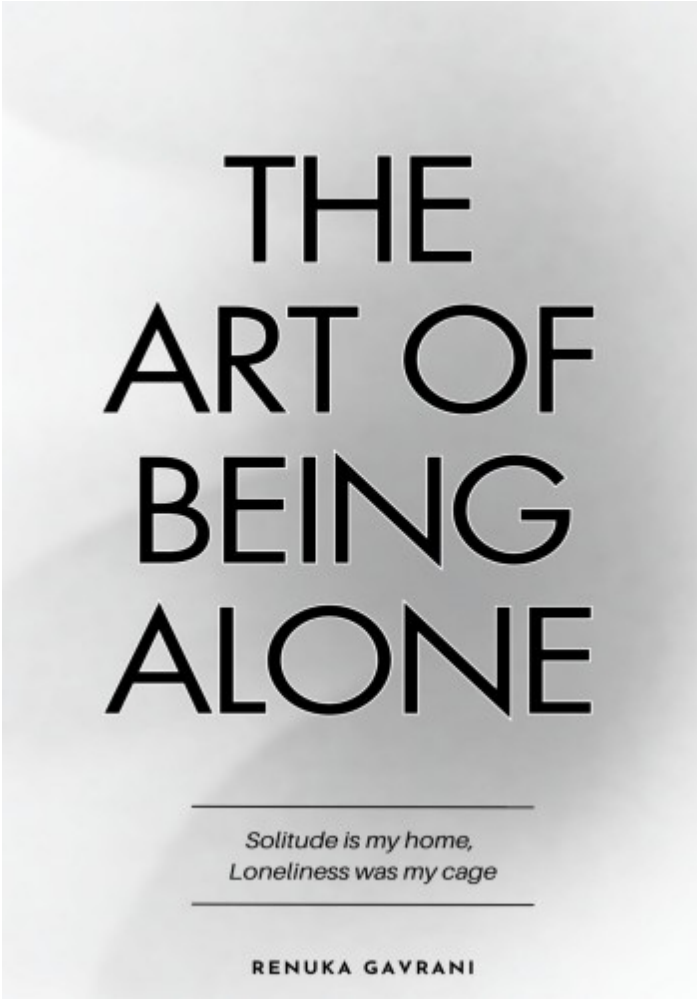
The Art of Being ALONE: Solitude Is My HOME, Loneliness Was My Cage

Renuka Gavrani



The Art of Being Alone

Solitude is my Home

Loneliness was my Cage

Renuka Gavrani

INDIAN BEST TELEGRAM E-BOOKS CHANNEL

(Click Here To Join)

उपन्यास संग्रह

Click Here

उपन्यास की दुनियाँ

Click Here

उपन्यास संग्रह चैट

Click Here

Primium Book 1004

Click Here

Primium Book 1005

Click Here

Noval Samrat (Premium)

Click Here

Book Badshah

Click Here

Mahakal The Boss

Click Here

Copyright © 2023 Renuka Gavrani All rights reserved No part of this book may be reproduced, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without express written permission of the author.

Contents

Acknowledgment

Introduction

Part One

Chapter 1 - Stop Romanticizing Loneliness

Chapter 2 - The Pain of Hiding Your True Self

Chapter 3 - How to Be YOU

Chapter 4 - The Love for Solitude

Part Two

Chapter 5 - Practicing The ART of Being Alone

Chapter 6 - Turn Loneliness Into Growth Period

Chapter 7 - Make a New Best Bud

Chapter 8 - Building a Dream Life Plan

Chapter 9 - The Action Plan

Chapter 10 - Make Your Alone Time Addictive

Chapter 11 - Become Independent

Dedication,

To all the people who are caged in their own minds

Acknowledgment

This book wouldn't have been possible without my support. I know it's a weird acknowledgment because most people credit their success to someone they love the most. Well, the thing is, I love myself the most for standing by myself when I couldn't find anyone. When no one was there and I was surrounded by self-doubts, uncertainty, and a dark future, I didn't give up on myself; for that, I want to thank myself. I want to thank myself for fighting hard against my own mind and doubts. I want to thank myself for doing everything it took to transform my dreams into my reality.

I also want to thank my Instagram followers & Medium readers who have showered immense love on all my articles & posts. A big thanks for making me feel so loved and confident. Without my readers, I am anyway, nothing.

Introduction

Dr. Vivek Murthy, former Surgeon General of the United States, recently wrote, *"Loneliness and weak social connections are associated with a reduction in lifespan similar to that caused by smoking 15 cigarettes a day"* . In fact, there is a huge amount of evidence showing individuals who report feelings of loneliness are more likely to have health problems later in their life.

When the idea of writing this book came to my mind, I decided that I wouldn't write a book that speaks data but rather a book that speaks from one heart to another heart. That's what you need, right? You don't care how many people in the world are lonely. You care about how you can deal with your loneliness.

Well, that's the first problem. Why is loneliness considered such a taboo in our society? **Why do you hate the idea of being with yourself so much that *'the time you spend with yourself is now considered as loneliness'***

and there should be some instant hacks and techniques to deal with

it? How can the idea of being with yourself make you feel scared?

Honestly, I have no authority to ask these questions. I wasn't very nice to myself either. I used to think that there was something wrong with me and that was the

reason people left me. And if I can fix that 'wrong' thing in me, perhaps, people will stay.

Though, after spending a long time on my own, figuring out my personality and thoughts, I realized that I am a pretty good person. I like being with myself. And I always did. I always loved spending time in my room, reading my books, and wandering to a distinct place that only I am aware of. That always felt luxurious to me.

I dug deeper into my past, studying why I hated the idea of being on my own, and why I tried to make friends when I never wanted a big group. I am an introvert and I like having only a few people around me. People who I truly love. I don't like to hang out with people who I call friends and bitch about behind their backs.

But then, the question traveled back to *'why I wished for the same things that I always hated?'*

And the answer was **'acceptance in the society** When I was still in high school, there was a girl in my class who was all alone in a class of 150 students. I cannot say why no one talked to her

because:

a) She was from a different section

b) I was a new student

Yet, those same people became my friends. Even I had friends from her section. But she, who had been studying there forever, didn't have any friends. I used to see her eating alone, sitting alone in the last row of the class so that she was hidden, and even going to the washroom alone. *Fun fact; Girls would rather control their pee than go to the washroom alone.*

But here she was, all alone.

And as much as people made fun of her, most students felt sorry for her as well. I remember I asked one of my friends about her. I didn't know her name so I said, *'Hey why does that girl from section A always*

seem to be alone?'

And my friend said, *'I don't know. I never talked to her either but she has always been like this since I joined the school. Other students say she is a weirdo, you know like…you know'*

This conversation is the answer to why we fear loneliness. The fear of loneliness was injected into our minds since we were kids. We have learned that the kid who eats alone, sits alone, and has no friends is pathetic. In every book or movie, the kid who is eating alone, and has no friend is always featured as a weak character who needs to be saved. Pick any book or movie, and you will observe a common pattern around loneliness in all of them. These people were shown as easy targets or an object of your sympathy.

No one wants to be seen as a 'weirdo' hence, our dread of being alone.

We don't want people to think of us as a weirdo, someone who needs to be saved or mocked. Someone who is unwanted or doesn't fit in with the cool kids.

I don't think I need to say a word about how much we give weight to others' opinions of us. It's our life but we live as per the rules of society. In fact, so many people don't take action on their goals because they are worried about what *people would think of them. What if people laugh at them? What if they fail and everyone sees them as a failure?*

Our lives have become a collection of others' thoughts and judgments.

The fear of judgment is enrooted so deep within us that before anyone else, we start judging ourselves. David Foster Wallace says, ***"You'll stop***

worrying what others think about you when you realize how seldom they

do."

It's quite ironic but **your biggest enemy and critic is no one else but YOU**.

Before anyone else, you know what you are up to, and before anyone can, you pass judgments on your next move based on *'what you think people will think of you'*

Look around you, no one's judgments are louder than your own in your life.

When I was in college, I didn't have any friends for almost 5 months. I had a huge fight with my then-friends and that left me with no one. While my other classmates were having fun with their friends, and everyone seemed to have a 'nice group', I was alone. I did a good job pretending that I don't care. And although I used to talk with my classmates and seniors, only I knew that I was alone. Everyone else thought I was having fun in arranging all these events in college, my juniors admired me for that and my classmates were jealous thinking that I was having *'real fun.'*

How ironic.

Do you see the problem here?

Not even a single person thought that *'I was lonely'* Yet I was worried

'What if they think I am a loner?'

For a few weeks, I felt sorry for myself. Even though I was having a good time with my *friends like acquaintances,* I would find a reason to drag myself down - thinking that I am an object of sympathy for everyone.

Though, what I realized over time is that

It's not pathetic to be alone. I realized that we don't hate being alone.

We hate to believe that we are left behind. And that, as we learned as a child, should be considered pathetic.

Well, BULLSHIT.

Stop feeling sorry for yourself because you don't have enough people to post a cute selfie on the internet. Stop thinking that you are a weirdo or there is something wrong with you.

There is no need to feel lonely or sorry for yourself. Being alone is a part of life, it's a part of adulting. Your friends and mates cannot stay with you for the rest of your life. Life moves pretty fast and everyone is trying to run faster so that they aren't left behind. The simple truth of life is, people leave, for good or bad, and life goes on. Some people will leave for a better job opportunity while there will be sometimes

when you will have to leave

people for career growth. And then there will be times when people will get bored of you and they will find another toy to play with. That's how it is.

Can you do something about it? Probably No. But you can do one thing and that is stop feeling sorry for yourself. Stop thinking that there is something wrong with you that needs to be fixed.

Stop trying to figure out what you can change in yourself or how you can pretend to look 'perfect'

The entertainment industry has done a good job of painting a picture of

'being alone means being lonely.'

Especially in this digital world where you see everyone on the internet has a cute-little group of friends. Some are going on trips with their friends while some are posting pictures that give *'friendship goals'* and among all that noise, it's easier to think that you are the only lonely person. The one person who doesn't have cool friends. The only person who wasn't chosen.

And that, my friend, is the primary reason why people treat being alone as a taboo. As a curse that needs to be dealt with.

But the truth is, all of this is just a pretty picture sold to you. Hence, the first myth that you need to unlearn is to stop believing that you are lonely just because you are alone. And I know that it may sound a little cliché but being alone and being lonely are two different things.

Being alone is a part of life. But **being lonely means viewing yourself from the lens of sympathy and misery.** When you look at yourself through the lens of loneliness, you feel insecure and left out. You start thinking that there is something wrong with you. And that lowers your self-respect. You start treating the time you spend with yourself as a curse -

that's loneliness. And that has nothing to do with you being alone. That just defines what you think of yourself.

While I am writing this book, I am all alone. I don't have any friends.

Not even a single soul who I can hang out with. Not because I am

pathetic or a loner. But because I never stayed in any school for longer than two years, I never had the kind of best friend we see in movies or books. And the ones that I had were either married or shifted to another city for work or college. Where does that leave me?

Well, there are two ways to look at it.

On the outside, people might think that I am a loner. I am in my 20s so I should have fun, go to parties, dress up nicely, and have a hot date with me every Friday. And since I don't have any of it, maybe I should take a

blanket, wrap it around me, watch Netflix on a loop, and feel sorry for myself.

Though, how I look at it is, I choose to stay in my hometown because I want to stay focused on my writing career. I am close to my parents and I can share a nice cup of coffee with my mother whenever I like. I can focus on being me rather than trying to adopt the definition of a 'cool girl' and most importantly, I now like being by myself.

When I threw the lens of loneliness out of the window, I was able to look at my life and the opportunities around me. Sure, it took some time to come to peace with the fact that *'I am not having fun and I am here all by myself'* but once I accepted that, I was able to focus on **'okay, what next?'**

I was able to create a lifestyle that I truly enjoy every day. I don't wait for weekends to have fun with friends. I look forward to every day enjoying one more thing, having more new experiences, reading one more book that I always wanted, exploring the unexplored areas of my city, and doing whatever I always wanted to **ALL BY MYSELF**. Without anyone's opinion on my choice, without any intervention when I am lost in the pool of my thoughts, and without letting anyone tell me if my idea of fun matches society's expectation of fun.

In a world where being alone is considered a curse, you should get up and use it to your advantage.

Taylor Swift said once, **"the scary news is, you are on your own now.**

But the cool news is, you are on your own now"

It's a complete myth that being alone means being lonely. No darling, that's not true. Being alone doesn't mean you are lonely.

Being alone means YOU ARE WITH YOURSELF.

I would recommend you close the book and take a minute to think about it. Once you also come to peace with the fact that being alone is not a curse.

And it can be a good thing, only then I shall recommend you to read further.

I have divided the book into two sections. Part one will be about learning to turn loneliness into solitude. And part two will be about turning solitude into your growth period. Only when you can learn to love solitude, will you be able to do everything on your own that you expect from people to do for/with you. Shall we?

Part 1 Turning Loneliness Into Solitude

Chapter 1 - Stop Romanticizing Loneliness

"*If there is anything that can be crueler than death, it's nurturing false hope in your heart just to see them crushing every piece of you at the end.* "

You must have watched those YouTube videos or maybe read books that encourage you to romanticize your life, haven't you?

Well, I have. And to be honest, only by watching those videos, do I fall back into my imaginary world where I am the QUEEN of the world (at least *of* my world). Just after imagining how it would feel to romanticize my life, I used to feel a different kind of adrenaline rush running through my veins, something that I cannot explain in words.

You might be thinking, Renuka, if you love the concept of romanticizing life then why are you stopping me to believe in it?

Well, after experimenting, learning, watching, and reading about romanticizing life, I came up with this one explanation which is: **Everyone is already romanticizing their life. They just don't know the nature of their character yet.**

Confusing?

Let me tell you how you are already walking down on this concept and why this can be the most dangerous thing for your future.

But let's first understand what romanticizing life means, shall we?

Romanticizing your life means becoming the main character of your life as if your entire day is being recorded. In short, you act like you are in a movie playing the role of the main character.

But here is the thing!

Consciously or unconsciously, we all act as the movie character behaves.

In any typical movie, the story starts with a girl and a boy. Either the girl is broken and finds herself in a dark tunnel with depression, stress, and anxiety (not to mention a poor girl is seen more often) or the same situation is played by the boy. Then?

Then the boy comes into her life as the HERO who saves her from this cruel world, gives her hope, teaches her how to love, and finally falls in love with her. And after that, both of them face this world **TOGETHER**

like God was conspiring from heaven for their paths to collide.

Sounds familiar?

If not the girl, then the boy is broken and then the girl comes as the Goddess to play the exact same role that we have just read. And if there is no love story then there is a friendship story that revolves around the same thing. A broken, depressed, and pathless person meets with another person and they become best friends for life.

Most of the movies/web series/books revolve around the same plot where one is broken and the other one comes as the guiding Angel which I like to call good drama.

Now, the problem is that people like you and me have been watching/ listening/reading about these kinds of life incidents since childhood that subconsciously we have made a belief- **one day someone will come to save you, rescue you, or rather fall in love with you.**

All my college life, I was waiting for a friendship like Joey and Chandler (from F.R.I.E.N.D.S) but nothing like that ever happened. I never had a best friend either in school or in college but I always wanted one. A kind of best friend we see in web series and movies. Perhaps, that is the reason that even after having a bunch of friends around me, I used to feel incomplete.

Though if I look back in time and see the world from a fresh perspective (or mature perspective), I can see a little girl wishing to have the same teddy bear she saw in some random movie.

So, what's wrong with this anyway?

Well, **your imagination shapes your reality** and here you are. Sitting there, thinking how broke you can be and then how a perfect angel-like person will come to save you. The problem with this is that **you CHOOSE**

to believe that YOU ARE NOT ENOUGH to change your life all by yourself. You rely your hope on someone who doesn't exist. And that's why, when things don't fall as per your imagination, you start feeling even more lonely as if you had something but you lost it.

If you have created an imaginary friend in your mind who you think will turn into reality, I would say, don't betray yourself. No one is coming to save you or make you laugh or travel with you around the world as it happens in the movie. Life is not a movie. Move on from your own hopes or get ready to see them crushed.

Believing that someday you will meet perfect friends who will become a part of your soul is more like creating a graveyard of your hopes. The more you focus on meeting new friends, the more it will hurt. You will feel

even more lonely thinking that you could have something but you didn't.

You will have to mourn the loss of someone you never had in the first place.

I am not saying that you wouldn't meet new people or you wouldn't be able to make new friends at all. I made some good friends after college through Instagram. But one harsh truth about that is - after a certain age, you don't make SOUL friends. You just meet people, help each other when needed and be nice to each other so that you have good people in your network. As a content creator, I come across a lot of people but I know in the end that they and I are in touch with each other for the sake of networking. After college, you don't make friends. You just network. You just try to be nice to people so you are not left behind (mostly).

But if you start imagining every person who is nice to you as your future buddy then you are practically digging a graveyard of your hopes.

And let me tell you one thing from experience, If there is anything that can be crueler than death, it's nurturing false hope in your heart just to see them crushing every piece of you at the end.

Instead of imagining yourself as the character who needs someone in the first place, imagine yourself as the main character of the movie that is your life. A movie like your life hasn't been made yet, and a book like your life hasn't been written yet. And that's why you have the creative freedom in your hands to write it as you want, make it as bold and wild as you want, keep it as long as you can, and above all make it about yourself rather than following an old pattern that doesn't empower you. You don't want to play the role of victim in your own life. You don't want to see yourself crying for someone you

never had. You don't want to victimize your character. Or DO YOU?

Chapter 2 - The Pain of Hiding Your True Self

"The most painful and scariest thing in the world is to look in the mirror and not recognize the person staring right at you."

The false hope that someday someone will magically show up and the fear of looking like a weirdo makes us do things that we never intended to do. Since childhood, we have learned that the kid who is alone is a weirdo.

They are alone because no one chose them. We don't want to seem a weirdo, we don't want people to think that no one chose us so what do we do? We start becoming like an ideal version of whom everyone loves. We start saying YES to things that we hate. We start dressing up in clothes that make us uncomfortable or are out of our budget but at the same time help us get noticed, accepted, and acknowledged. We start speaking the words we find cringe. We start saying things that are most acceptable and popular. We start doing the things that make us look like 'everyone' else so that we don't come out as weirdo. We, indeed, become an ideal version of a happy, cute-little human who everyone adores or at least no one makes fun of. But step by step, as we become like everyone else, we go far away from who we truly are. The more thought you give to what people think of you, the less attention you give to what you want, what you like, what you think, how you would like to enjoy life, and more importantly what makes you, YOU.

It's like becoming a people pleaser without realizing it. The gap between who you truly were and who you have become in the hope to fit in grows so much that even you find it difficult to recognize yourself.

And that gives birth to the root of loneliness. People start becoming like the most acceptable version in the hope to find their tribe that they lose their real selves. And that is the reason why we call the time we spend with ourselves 'lonely.' Loneliness is not when you don't have people around.

Loneliness occurs when you cannot find yourself inside you. The moment you feel the loss of your real self, that's when loneliness makes a home inside you. That's the worst kind of loneliness where you might be surrounded by people yet you feel lonely. It's like you cannot feel yourself.

Like you are not there anymore.

And do you what's even more ironic?

It starts with you trying to become someone you are not because you wanted to fit in. But it leaves you hating being with yourself. And tell me

something, how can anyone accept a person who doesn't accept themselves? How can anyone love to spend time with a person who hates spending time with themselves? Where does it leave you? Nowhere. **In the race of achieving people's acceptance and love, you end up losing yourself.**

I have spent the majority of my life trying to be nice to people so that I can be an ideal version. I said *'Yes'* to outings when I wanted to stay at home and read books. I kept talking and smiling when I wanted to say that I am tired or I have got some work to do so I will catch up later. I even dressed up when I wanted to go casual. All of it so that I could be what people wanted me to be.

However, what I didn't realize at that point was that *'I may have become an ideal version for others but what about myself?'*

What do I think of myself? What are my opinions about myself? What do I like and what do I don't? What are my fears? What are some things that I want to do in my day-to-day life yet I don't because I have become an expert in silencing my inner voice?

And I know I am not alone in this. We all are the same. Since childhood, we have competed against each other. Whose child is cutest or smarter or more intelligent? Either we try to be a perfect version of ourselves for our parents so that they can be proud of us or we try to appear cool and fun so that we can be a part of the most popular group in college.

We ran in this race for so long that our real selves couldn't keep up with our pace of changing personalities. Our real self is hidden deep inside under the layers of manners, and etiquette. We do the things that seem cool instead of trying new things that our soul wants. I am a pro at that. I want to learn a bunch of new things but I don't have time. Yet if any of my friends call me and share their shit, I will be all ears so that they have a shoulder to cry on.

What we don't realize is that just as we stop talking to people who ignore us. Similarly, our souls stop communicating with us. And one

day when you are alone with no one to hang out with or click sassy pictures with, you find spending time with yourself painful. Why?

Because there is so much hidden that if you sit down to uncover the layers, years will go by but you wouldn't be able to find the real YOU.

That's why I say,

"There are some days when you miss yourself more than you have ever missed anyone else"

I am no expert in psychology nor am I a therapist who can talk about what goes inside a human brain. But I am a human and I know what goes inside a human's heart. We all are trapped in the same cycle of pleasing people around us so that we are more accepted and appreciated. We ignore what we are feeling because who has time for that? We don't do what gives us real joy because that's probably old school.

The burden gets heavier with each passing day. With every day your real self goes far away from you. Your own images become blurry. And it becomes painful to take a look deep inside yourself.

I have made these mistakes and I don't want you to do that. So in the next few chapters, we will discuss how you can become more YOU which will help you turn your alone time into solitude.

Chapter 3 - How to Be YOU

The need to fit in, to be like the most famous and cool person, and to be accepted lovingly is inherited in all of us. But how long do you think you can handle this? For how long do you think you can suppress and hide your real identity? For how long are you going to be different from different people? You try to be different for everyone around you. You are different for your partner, different for your boss, different for your friends, and different for your loved ones.

And in all of this, THE REAL YOU IS LOST. YOU HAVE LOST

YOUR REAL ESSENCE, YOUR REAL SELF. Imagine Yourself as a computer and see how you have opened different tabs of your personality for each person you meet. New person, new tab. Perhaps, that's the reason your real personality has crashed.

It's not like I am a saint. I have tried hard to change myself into the most acceptable and loving version as well. In fact, there are times

when by default, I try to hide who I truly am or what I am thinking just to present myself as a *'wanted'* person. Why? Why do we have to try so hard to get others' attention and is it worth losing our real identity?

And do you know what's funny? After losing ourselves completely, we fall for those *'self-love'* hacks. Sometimes, I feel like we are kidding ourselves.

I am not a love expert. God forbid. But I know one thing that you fall in with someone when you get to know them. Isn't it?

So, let's find YOU so that you can fall in love with the real YOU. Shall we?

I. Self-Love Starts with Self-Acceptance I have been using social media like a spy for the past year. During this time, I have seen the growing popularity of *"self-love"* and the more definitions I read on self-love, the less I became interested in even thinking about self-love.

Self-love has become more like self-pity.

If that wasn't enough, giant companies and clever marketers took advantage of this growing popularity of self-love to sell cute shampoo bottles, expensive perfumes, and things like that. While I will never understand how self-love became about decorating yourself from head to toe, I want to share what self-love really means. A definition that is less accepted and discussed.

As clear cut as possible, self-love is about two things: 1.

Knowing Yourself: What you think, how you think, what is your true nature, what is hidden behind all the manners and etiquettes, what is your personality and the like (we will discuss that in the next chapter)

2.

Accepting Yourself: Acknowledging everything that is inside you and accepting it, be it good or bad. Most people hide their ugly side somewhere deep inside them so that no one can know their dark side. However, what you don't realize is that the deeper you hide, the darker it gets inside your heart. And that darkness will swallow you bit by bit until you can no longer find the sunshine.

Society has made us believe that we must always be loving, caring,

and cute. That's what we see in movies and web series, right? Good people are good to everyone all the time. And we all install a desire subconsciously that *'there are good humans and bad humans and if we can fall under the good human category then we will be loved and appreciated and accepted as well.'*

Then?

We try hard to be NICE. We try to be good to people even when they are abusive to us because that's what good people do, right? And this trial period keeps draining you because how can you be good all the time? How can you love others when you are hurt yourself? How can you be kind when you need to help yourself? You keep trying to meet the criteria of being a good person until you kill something inside you. And then suddenly you realize, oh, I need healing?

WOW! What a trap.

And this reminds me that even though we all want to be good and nice yet we sympathize more with the villain of any web series or book. *WHY?*

Because villains show us that **'we all can be bad at times not intentionally but because we are designed to feel all kinds of emotions.**

We are not mobile phones where you cannot use Android features in ios or ios features in Android devices. **You are a HUMAN. For God's sake, start treating yourself like one.'**

Villains teach us that our dark side doesn't define us but it is still a part of us. Since society is not very welcoming with traits that don't fall under the good girl or good boy category, we just try to suppress everything inside us that we genuinely feel, think, and love. I don't know when you or I started silencing our inner voice but we have done it successfully enough to seek the definition of self-love in the external world.

If you ask me, I used to think I am a good person too. I believe in kindness, love, compassion, and being warm to people. I want to be the reason people still believe in kindness and love. But at the same time, I know I am not God and I make mistakes. Mistakes that at times hurt people.

But hating myself for making mistakes or

for letting go of people or for saying whatever I feel cannot make me love myself.

So, can we please stop playing this game? Can YOU please stop pretending that your dark side doesn't exist?

Let me share an example from my own life so you can relate better. As I said, I want to be nice to people so that I don't become the reason someone cries. But after 2 years of constant self-examination, I have studied my behavior. And that behavior says that I can be selfish at times. Yes, that's true. I am not all good nor am I God. I have chosen ME over my friends many times.

Although, the whole self-love journey made me realize that *'it's okay to accept myself as a selfish person.'*

That's one of the truths about me. I know good people are not supposed to be selfish but I am. I can either hate myself for that or learn to use this one trait in my favor. Learning to choose myself, my happiness, and my career over anything.

This one truth about me made me realize how I function in relationships (with friends & family). Since I know my behavior, I would always set my expectations

clearly so people know what they can expect from me. This clarity is what brings peace to your relationship with yourself and others.

If you don't know yourself, you will make similar mistakes in your relationships with everyone and then if people leave you, you will say

"Why doesn't anyone want to be with me? Maybe I am not just lovable, or maybe there is something wrong with me that pushes people away."

Self-love, my dear, is not only about taking bubble baths, applying expensive makeup to call it a self-care day. That just defines your lifestyle.

Self-love is about knowing everything about yourself, however ugly or dark or bad your truth is, and accepting yourself with it. Self-love is about knowing how to transform your flaws into your strengths rather than hiding them inside you so that no one can see them.

Self-love is about choosing yourself every single day to study your patterns, examine your behavior, knowing your thoughts (even if they are mean at times). Self-love is about creating a home deep inside you

where you can be YOU without worrying about healing, pretending, or perfectionism. You are beautiful with your dark side not by hiding them under the mask of goodness.

I feel pathetic to say that there is a dark side in all of us. Because it's not even our dark side, it's just who we are. That is how we are designed.

That's what makes us unique and different from each other. You don't have to be bad to people.

You just have to learn to not loathe yourself for having some traits that are not accepted in our well-dressed society. Be proud of what you are and accept every bit of yourself.

Now that you know that you don't have to be all classy and glassy to love yourself, I guess it will be a lot easier to get to know yourself. Let's go

on the journey of meeting you then. Shall we?

II. Self-Love Grows with Self-Knowledge

"Your inner world has more wonders than the 7 wonders of the world"

I wish I could tell you some hacks and techniques to get to know yourself or perhaps, a schedule or a video that you can follow but the sad news is, you are not a subject that you can just study, understand, and close the book. You are a human. Well, yes not brand-new information. But without stretching it unnecessarily, as humans, we change rapidly. We evolve. Our preferences change and our working style changes and our priorities change. What worked for you yesterday might not work for you tomorrow. What you liked 3 months back may not be your preference today.

How you liked to spend your time 6 months back might be something you hate today.

Hence, hands down. I am sorry but I cannot give some random hacks that just sound good on paper, and make you feel inspired at the moment just to make you feel guilty for not following them later. Yes, I know this is a self-help book and I am supposed to give you some good-looking techniques. But darling, you are not a constant self-improvement project.

A Journey to Self,

Knowing yourself is not a one-day job or a 3-week long project. It's a

life-long journey. We are living in a world of distractions. It takes less

than a second to start wishing for something that we never wanted just

because everyone else seems to have it/enjoy it. In such a world, where

you are always surrounded by noise, it's tough to stay connected to the

voice deep inside you. And let me repeat it again, it's a lifelong process to

know yourself and secondly not to lose yourself.

There are a few things that helped me and I hope they will help you as well. These are not instant hacks but everyday habits that I follow to date so be ready for the execution of them.

A) Come Face-to-Face With Your Mind

"It is a joy to be hidden, and disaster not to be found."

— D.W. Winnicott

When you are alone, you are dealing with just one mind, YOUR MIND.

Some treat it as a luxury while others treat it as a punishment.

During your alone time, you are on your own. Your mind has a way of pulling you back to everything that had or could go wrong in your life. Your mind plays tricks on you to create unnecessary worries.

When Covid-19 hit the world and we were forced to stay at our homes, I did a lot of digging in my mind. Initially, it felt more like a punishment because duh! I wasn't ready to listen to the 1,000 thoughts that my mind was generating every other minute. It was at that moment, I realized how my mind never sleeps and always gives me a reason to worry about. Hence, the itch to go out in public and ignore the mind's voice.

Perhaps, this is the reason why so many people end up being in toxic

relationships. People are afraid of what their mind will do to them, they are afraid of what their mind will make them believe, and they are afraid of what their mind will push them to do (in my case, calling my mean friends) As Rollo May said: *"Many people suffer from the fear of finding oneself alone, and so they don't find themselves at all."*

Though I dug deeper into the problem and said to myself, *being with me doesn't have to be so cruel* and tough if only I become more mindful. I started doing more 'meet-ups with my mind' to understand myself better.

To know what goes in my mind, how I think, how I react, what triggers me, and basically everything that I was once afraid of uncovering.

And if there is anything that I realized with these regular 'meetings'

with my mind, it's that, your mind is not stupid nor it's your enemy. You cannot stand being with yourself because there is so much buried inside you. Things that you don't want to admit.

Though, let me tell you one thing. There is FREEDOM in knowing yourself. You feel like nothing can hurt you when you face everything that your mind was threatening you about.

So, instead of finding ways to silence your mind. Get up and come face-to-face with whatever your mind has to offer you.

There were things about myself that I didn't want to admit (my default behavioral pattern in certain situations) However, now that I have accepted it, I don't fear my own mind. I am working on those things to upgrade myself.

Use your alone time to KNOW YOURSELF. When you are alone, you are dealing with just one mind, one set of choices, behavior, and thinking patterns. Hence, it becomes easier to study yourself and get to know what you like and what you don't like, how you think, and how you react.

The reason why most people find it so difficult to sit with themselves or read their own thoughts is that;

There is too much untapped and unnoticed. And obviously, years of ignorance have created a vast pool of things that you need to deal with. So, it may seem a little scary when you sit and boom! Your mind starts attacking you. One bad thing you did years ago, some regrets

and mistakes that are living in your mind rent-free to give you something to worry about on days you finally decide to be happy, or maybe some bad thoughts that keep returning back even when you don't want them.

Most people cannot muster enough courage to face it all hence, the smarter way seems to be to silence it all by throwing short-term pleasure on your face like watching Netflix, or going out with people who you don't like.

The simple fact that you don't know yourself is the reason why you accept the bare minimum from people.

They help distract you and this is what you want, don't you?

So, yes, there is a lot inside you. But it is all a part of you so there is no permanent escape. You have to face it all. One day at a time. One thought, one regret, one guilt, one bad decision at a time.

And I promise, once you face it all, once you uncover all the layers of your past, once you acknowledge everything that your mind was threatening you against, you will feel FREE like you can take a breath without any fear. That's the start of peace.

So, give yourself the time it requires to uncover what's buried inside you. Everything that you have been ignoring for such a long time. Every thought you are afraid to accept. Every decision that you regret taking/not taking. **Set yourself FREE.**

It won't be easy but it will be worth it. It will take some time. But my advice to you is, if you can do one thing, I recommend you to try this

challenge. Every day takes at least 10-15 minutes to just be with your soul.

You must take out some time to know yourself, a time when you don't have to fake it and when you can completely accept yourself without any judgments or fear.

Practice: Sit With Yourself & Try to Read Your Thoughts. Read your thoughts like you are reading a classic book. Like you are spending time with the most amazing person on this planet. You can say and feel anything without worrying about what people would say. You can share your trauma or unhealed past as if you are your own therapist.

And one day, it will become interesting to get to know so much about

yourself. You will feel excited to know why you laugh at a certain joke and why you eat a certain dish in a certain style. It will start feeling like falling in love with yourself.

B) Know Thyself

"The greatest thing in the world is to know how to belong to oneself."

-Michel de Montaigne

I was in high school when one of my professors said this, *'You all seem to act too smart as if you are the kings/queens of the world while in reality, if I ask you to speak about yourself for as many minutes as your age, 18*

minutes let's say if that's your age, then none of you can speak even for a minute. ' He continued, *'and when I say about yourself, I don't mean the worldly tags that you have accumulated, I mean the REAL YOU.'*

Back then, I didn't understand what he meant. I thought he was being angry for no reason. But now after reading a bunch of spiritual books, following the path of spirituality myself, and paying attention to my soul, I have come to realize that you and I are beyond the title of this world.

Though, we all have become a collection of tags and labels that we have either willingly imposed on ourselves or that the world threw at us. The tags of a good or bad person. Sad or happy. Poor or rich. Loving or hateful.

Failure or successful. Writer or Lawyer. Beautiful or Ugly. Smart or dumb.

Supportive or toxic. And the list of such fancy tags wouldn't come to an end until the day you die.

And death reminds me of birth.

When you and I were first born, we were free from all the worldly tags.

For us, nothing was good or bad. We were just there at the moment.

Perhaps, that is the reason why people love babies so much. When you are with a baby, the baby doesn't judge you based on the black-and-white specific tags. The baby doesn't say *'Oh this girl is brown. I wish a*

young white tall lady was carrying me.' The baby doesn't say *'I don't want to be around this dumb person who cannot score good grades or I will be like him.'* The baby doesn't judge you based on past mistakes, future endeavors, color, religion, or social status. The baby is just a cute little creature looking right into your eyes with curiosity. You make funny faces so the baby laughs and when the baby does, it makes you so happy as if you have won a Nobel prize.

WHY? Why is happiness so cheap when you are around a baby? Why are you so YOU when you are holding a baby? And most of all why don't you judge a baby when you look at him? Why don't you say that this baby

would have been a little more attractive if he was a little cuter, or born into a rich family? Why don't you compare a baby to any other baby?

Because the baby allows you to be YOU without making you feel insecure about the shape of your nose, the color of your skin, the zeros in your bank balance, or your grades. You can be YOU when you hold a baby and so can a baby be just a little human without getting any life advice or judgments from you.

The tragedy is we all were babies once too. We all used to spread love with our smiles whenever anyone took us in their arms. We all were once complete and beautiful. And we used to make other people feel complete and beautiful too without giving them any tags.

I cannot say exactly which concept, incident, or system made us question ourselves and others but somehow we lost. We lost our capability to be happy for no reason, to feel beautiful, and to not judge ourselves or others.

It may have all started when we started accumulating tags from the external world. The more tags we collect, the faster we start losing our authentic selves. Society likes to put you in a box because it is easier that way to market products. If you are black, buy this fairness cream and so on.

And it is even sadder that you start treating yourself and others as a tag.

But enough of this stupid system that likes to cage everyone. This system is stupid because no one is happy. And I am here to beat that system. It starts with you and me.

And to break that system, here is what we can do: **Free Yourself and Others:**

When I was around 10, there was a death in my family. It was my grandfather's brother's wife. And I remember one of my relatives was talking about me. She said *'I don't look as good as other girls in my family do'*

Can you imagine? There is a dead body and people are busy judging you. What do you think I must have felt?

I remember not considering myself beautiful till the age of 17. And I know how it feels to be judged so badly. But what I also remember is *'I tagged myself as ugly'* and that shattered my confidence till 17.

It happens to all of us. Everyone gets different kinds of tags from the world and starts defining themselves as per the tag. And that tag can leave its imprint on your heart until you can no longer bear its burden.

So I would suggest you let go of all the tags that the world has thrown at you, tags that you have attached to your soul, and free others from the tags you give to them. Don't define people. Don't put people in a box. Don't give them tags. Because your one tag can be a pain in someone else's heart.

And, if someone else is giving you tags (be it good or bad), instantly mutter in your mind *'yet another tag. But I don't want it'*

Be free and let others be free too. Don't make life so specific that it feels like carrying a burden.

When we start defining ourselves with one particular thing, our entire focus revolves around it. And when that one thing goes wrong, we feel like a failure. And it's not just about the profession but personal relationships as well.

For example; If I say I am an author and put it as a label, I will always judge myself based on the number of copies of my books have been sold, how many people loved my book, and things around it. And if someone doesn't like my work, does that make me a bad writer?

Something similar happens in personal relationships as well. When we become attached to one person/relationship, that person or relation starts defining our existence. That person can control our lives. That relationship can break our hearts into pieces if someday it ends. It

could be with your romantic partner or your parents. If your mother doesn't acknowledge your efforts, does that make you a bad daughter?

Am I just a collection of tags and labels? And should I spend my life collecting all the good tags like a good daughter, loving partner, good sister, supportive friend, a good writer, and more such tags that are well accepted in society?

And what if someday I fail? What if I end up hurting my my friends because I have my shit to deal with? Does that make me a bad person?

What if my books don't do well? Should I stop writing then?

I believe that we are beyond the titles of the external world. I think a particular word cannot define our core being. One tag cannot describe you or me. We are more than just our professional goals and personal life relationships. All these things are external.

You and I are a piece of everything we owned, every place we have traveled, every person we met, and every word we read. Everything leaves a mark on our soul that paints our personality into who we are today.

We are stitched together by the songs we enjoy, people we love, adventurous experiences we have had, books we read and the characters in them that we lived for a while, and many more small things like these that shape our perception and personality.

But when we remain restricted to one particular tag, we put ourselves in a cage while expecting to behave/talk/think in a certain way. Perhaps, that is why there is no uniqueness left in you and me. We are walking on the same path as everyone else.

But I think that our entire personality or existence should not revolve around one person or one thing or one tag. **We should be undefinable**.

Like no one can put us in a cage. Like if someone even tries to define us, it should take them hours to talk about our personality. Like I don't want people to say *, 'Renuka is a great author with excellent writing skills'*

I want people to say, ' *Renuka writes in a way that makes you feel safe, loved, and understood. She loves writing and reading. She lives in a world that exists beyond the human mind. She loves nature and often finds herself gazing at the clear sky to find a hidden secret of the Universe. She*

loves coffee and she drinks it like it's a drop of heaven'

I understand these things cannot be noticed by others but they can be noticed by you. You can live more. You can become indescribable for yourself. Like if you take a pause to talk about what you do, you have to think *'What should I talk about first?'*

And that's why I said earlier, learning about yourself is a lifelong process. You change every day a little. You evolve with every song, every book, every article, every video, and every thought you come across. This is the reason sitting for once and defining yourself wouldn't work. **If you want to know yourself, you have to be interested in yourself for the rest of your life.** And you must remember one thing, You are beyond a particular tag. You cannot be labeled. Be undefinable.

Let them wonder who you are while you create a personality for yourself that makes you fall in love with yourself every day.

III. Define Who & What You Are Not Let me tell you one thing. When you will walk on the journey of self-exploration, you will realize one thing, *you are not easy* which is a good thing. But that is one of the key reasons why people give up on themselves.

It becomes a lot more to handle than it sounds.

In fact, when I started my self-exploration journey, I was overwhelmed and confused. I didn't know where to start. I am not a subject and there wasn't any index that I could follow. And after a lot of trial & error, reading, and experimenting, I followed one piece of advice that helped me get started on my journey.

The advice: *If you cannot figure out who you are, figure out who you are not and who you don't want to be.*

It's easier to know who you are not and what you never want to be than to start with who you are in the first place. When you make a list of who you are not, and who you don't want to be, you will also get a sense of clarity about what you don't like and why you don't like certain things. It helps you get to know your choices, principles, and thinking patterns better.

You can start by making a list of things you hate or you are against (even if those things are well-accepted in society) and alongside, write or make a mental note of why you don't like those things.

TASK: Take it as your assignment or task or whatever you want to call it. Sit down every day for 5 minutes, alone with no disturbance around you.

Let yourself be immersed in your personality. Write down one or two things that you think you don't like and then write why you don't like those things.

It will help you to know your values, hence, getting closer to yourself a little. Not only that, but you will also understand that you are not a follower and that you don't accept every definition that's been thrown at you. It will help you **THINK INDEPENDENTLY** without accepting the world's definition.

Though, let me give you a warning. As you get to know more things that you are against but the world accepts, never share those things with anyone. Yes, I am asking you to keep your opinions to yourself. Let people think you agree with them. And that's not because you are a people pleaser or you are afraid to voice your opinion. But because the world is full of clowns. Not everyone has an open mind to accept that differences of

opinion can exist. Don't go out there and scream your perception. Don't think that people will agree with you.

In fact, that's the reason most people just follow the crowd. They know if they voice their opinions, they will be kicked out. This fear is one of the reasons why most people are followers, not thinkers.

Make sure, you don't make that mistake. Give your opinions only when specifically asked. Otherwise, keep your thoughts inside you. I do it all the time. I know that people are different from me. Their upbringing, educational background, and experiences are different from mine. So, it's obvious they wouldn't have similar opinions. I don't judge them for their opinions and I don't let anyone judge for mine. And just because your opinions are different doesn't mean they are superior. Maybe if you stay silent and listen to the other person, you will get to know a new perception.

So, go ahead and make a list of everything that you think you are not, or what you never want to be. *For example;* While I was in college, almost every other student used to drink. I never touched it even when my friends asked me to at least try. Why? Because I knew I am not this and I never will.

"If you compromise with your principles once, it will become

your habit to cheat your principles and do what's cool."

I am not saying you should drink or should not. I am saying I never wanted to try it. So I stood my ground. Now, it's your turn to stand tall on yours.

That was the one reason I was often misjudged and left alone. I didn't want to just belong to some group. I wanted to be with people who align with my values and principles. This is the thing about knowing what you don't want. Once you set the lines clear for yourself, you stop taking the garbage in. You stop taking the bare minimum from people. You stop laughing at jokes that aren't funny and you stop saying yes to everything because now you know what you are not, what you don't want, and what you will never be. It raises your standard. It makes you feel that you are not here to adjust to everyone or everything. You simply learn to reject what you know you don't want. It's that simple. There is no such thing as learning to say NO. All you need to do is learn to know what you don't want. Set the standards high and if people cannot climb those standards for

you, then they will automatically stay away from you. This is how you attract good people and stay away from toxic ones. In fact, your eyes become blind to those who are toxic. In one simple glance, you can tell they don't align with your values.

Chapter 4 - The Love for Solitude Wayne W. Dyer once said ***"You cannot be lonely if you like the person***

you're alone with." and that I believe should be enough to close this part of the book.

But you are reading a self-help book so you want me to keep saying something until you are forced to believe that solitude is good. Though, I am not going to do it. Do you know why?

Because that's our problem. We want others to make us believe in something. Hold our hands and show us the path. And when people leave us in between the journey, we feel lost like it's all dark and scary. What you don't realize is that you need to walk alone to reach where you want to go.

Everyone has different goals so they cannot take the same route as you. You will meet some good/bad people on the way but eventually, they will turn the other way to move towards their journey. And in the end, you will be left alone. The choice would be yours, whether you want to stay on the way and cry and scream at people for leaving

you while they enjoy their journey.

Or do you want to keep walking and get closer to your dream destination?

In both cases, you will be alone. But the choice of crying and seeing yourself as a helpless person or to keep walking and enjoying the journey will be in your hands.

After fifth grade, I never stayed in any school for longer than 2 years. I kept switching schools until college. Being an introverted and extremely under-confident child, it was already quite tough for me to make friends.

And when I would finally make one friend who could turn into my best friend, I would have to start from scratch again. I had a really close friend in high school who is now married but I had to leave her because I changed school. Then I had another really close friend in +2 but then it was time for me to leave my hometown and shift to another city for college. And then as God was creating a perfect illusion, I met my then-best friend on the first day of college who was also my roommate. For 4-5 months, the two of us were such great friends that even professors knew that we always stayed together. And for the first time, I felt like I found a best friend. But then I got really sick and had to come back to my home town for 15 days. When I went back after 15 days, I was already replaced. I knew that now I no longer fit in her definition of *'fun.'* So, boldly I asked her to pick either her new friends or me. Well, you can imagine the rest.

I was alone for almost 3-4 months back then.I met some new people after this 4 month gap and long story short, they became some of the most amazing people I ever met. I met my girl gang who I still miss. These girls made me understand that *'women uplift each other and women need each other more than they need men'* Society tricked us into believing that women are women's biggest enemy but honey, you cannot even imagine what a woman can do for another woman.

Now back to my point, when my college life came to an end and I came back to my hometown, obviously we had to leave each other. I was with my friends for a short period but leaving them felt like leaving a part of me (for a while). When my college life ended, I thought distance cannot come between true friendship. This is what social media gurus say, right?

The initial few months were great. My friends and I used to connect

every now and then to gossip about our college, remember the stupid things we used to do, and share our general life updates. It was going well until after a few months, every one of us got busy with our work. And even when we tried to take out time to have a call, we somehow ran out of topics to talk about. Our lives, profession, and environment were now different and so were our priorities.

It was in those moments that loneliness started hitting me. And I know even though I have said that loneliness and being alone are two different things and I still stand by my words. But it is also true that your heart misses people who made you feel at home just by their presence. Their stupid jokes, their gentle touch, their inspiring words, and their hidden care and love. It all makes you miss them. Missing the people who you cannot be with anymore. And realizing that you wouldn't be able to meet the people who were a part of you creates loneliness.

Though, what I realized is that people are on and off in everyone's life.

They come and go, for good or bad. In case you didn't understand, I meant that after watching this great web series and movies on friendship and romance, we are just manipulated into believing that *'there is something called forever.'* However, when your own friends or partner leave you, you feel betrayed, lonely, and incomplete. You and I have nourished a belief that people have to be available for us 24/7. But real life doesn't work that way.

People aren't ambulances who can be available to you whenever you want.

They have got their own shit to deal with. They have got a career to work

for. A family to nurture. A goal to achieve. And a few breaths to inhale in silence.

And this was one of the harsh truths that I had to accept when my college life came to an end and I had to say Goodbye to my friends.

Initially, I used to feel sad and lonely too but later I realized *'that is how things are going to be for the rest of our lives.'* This is the part of adulthood when you have to say Goodbye even if you don't want to. This is part of being an adult when you have to let go of people to get a hold of your career. That's why I said earlier that *Loneliness Is a Part of the Journey*. I am not saying that you have to choose between career

and friendship. But it happens automatically that you wonder, *'How did my friends slip away from my hands?'*

That's the bargain of making a career and living your dreams. Yes, there are some people who are lucky enough to have both but that seldom happens in reality and more in movies/books. *For example;* One of my favorite series is FRIENDS but if you observe this series, all 6 friends hang out with each other all the time. They are always sitting in a coffee shop but that's not possible in reality. You have a job, career, studies, and a lot more things to look after. You cannot just sit around all the time.

So, let's make a new belief or rather an agreement that ***"you cannot***

expect people to stay forever." Not because they are bad but because they have a lot to deal with in their own lives and that's a part of growing up.

The concept of forever is just a fantasy that you have bought from some random series. In our generation, forever means following each other on social media and once in a while commenting on each other's posts and keeping each other in our memory lane. That's it. Other than this, if you are expecting

anything from anyone, you are just preparing yourself to get hurt. So, kill your expectations of other people and realize one simple truth,

"You are on your OWN now. Except for YOU, no one is going to stay by your side forever. People cannot babysit you forever."

So, even if you are around people or you find good people in the future (like I had), know one thing: you cannot be dependent on anyone.

You will have to create enough space in your heart for yourself so that being with yourself feels safe and loved. And being with people feels like a

bonus, not a short-term pleasure or escape.

So, ask yourself what you want for yourself. If you chose to keep walking then make one more choice - the choice of loving the person who you are with and that is YOURSELF. When you love yourself, you will view the journey as a treat. As I said earlier, it's liberating to be with yourself. You are with just one mind, one voice, one type of opinion and perception. You wouldn't have to take the burden of

becoming who you are not to please people you don't like just to fit in, just for them to hold your hands until the end. When you know you can walk alone just as fine, you will be astonished to experience such simple joys of life that your soul enjoys.

I hope you understand what I mean. I am not asking you to push people away. Never do that. It's hard to find people who truly love you. All I am asking is to not forget yourself in the noise of the world.

The next section of the book is based on - *turning solitude into your growth period.* But it can happen when you start viewing your loneliness as solitude. As a privilege, not a curse. When you are ready to walk with yourself, let's learn to walk toward your dream life. Shall we?

Part 2 Turning Solitude Into Growth Period

Chapter 5 - Practicing The ART of Being Alone

"Some people are alone because they don't have friends or family. Some people practice being alone because they want to stay connected to themselves."

Georgia O'Keeffe was an American modernist artist, often called the

'mother of American modernism.' Born on November 15, 1887, the second of seven children, Georgia Totto O'Keeffe grew up on a farm near Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. By the time she graduated from high school, she had determined to make her way as an artist. Georgia studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Art Students League in New York, where she learned the techniques of traditional painting. The direction of her artistic practice shifted dramatically four years later when she studied the revolutionary ideas of Arthur Wesley Dow. Dow offered O'Keeffe an alternative to established ways of thinking about art. She experimented with abstraction for two years while she taught art in West Texas. Through a series of abstract charcoal drawings, she developed a personal language to better express her feelings and ideas.

O'Keeffe mailed some of these highly abstract drawings to a friend in New York City. Her friend showed them to Alfred Stieglitz, the art dealer and renowned photographer, who would eventually become O'Keeffe's husband. He became the first to exhibit her work, in 1916.

By the mid-1920s, O'Keeffe was recognized as one of America's most important and successful artists, known for her paintings of New York

skyscrapers—an essentially American symbol of modernity—as well as her equally radical depictions of flowers.

O'Keeffe was at the peak of her career when she found herself restless in the city life of New York, craving to escape the crowds. While Stieglitz, her husband, was a social butterfly, O'Keeffe preferred being alone. She always said 'There is a kind of freedom in being alone.'

Finally, in 1929, after much deliberation, she left for New Mexico for the very first time. This became the first of her many extended trips in the desert, where she spent months wandering alone, living in tents, with nothing but her art supplies for the company.

In 1934 O'Keeffe bought a piece of land on a ghost ranch and permanently moved to the desert. Here she spent four years restoring the ranch and setting up her solitary abode. Her minimalist house with a view of the Cerro Paranal mountains became her own little haven, where she lived up to almost a hundred years **'deliciously alone'**, in blissful solitude, making art till her body allowed her.

Her art and the inspiration behind it were simple as she used to say, **"I had to create an equivalent for what I felt about what I was looking at –**

not copy it."

Georgia O'Keeffe is not the first nor the only artist who found inspiration in solitude. History, if you flip the pages, is filled with examples of legendary artists, warriors, and writers who found their hearts speaking to them directly when they spent time with themselves. Much like Georgia, Nikola Tesla preferred solitude and went on to say, *"The mind is sharper and keener in seclusion and uninterrupted solitude. No big laboratory is needed in which to think. Originality thrives in seclusion free of outside influences beating upon us to cripple the creative mind. Be alone, that is the secret of invention; be alone, that is when ideas are born. That is why many of the earthly miracles have had their genesis in humble surroundings."*

Vincent van Gogh was a Dutch post-impressionist painter who became one of the most influential figures in Western art only after his death. He created over 2,100 artworks, many of which while living in solitude.

Vincent often felt lonely but instead of crying over it or finding fake/ degrading company, he used his art to express himself and his experiences with loneliness. He once said, *"Though I am often in the*

depths of misery, there is still calmness, pure harmony, and music inside me."

These are just some of the examples of the greatest artists who choose to be alone so that they can eliminate the external noise which takes them away from their true nature. Cal Newport talks about *'how all the great writers, artists and inventors choose to spend time with no distractions so that they can connect with something deep within themselves and create a true masterpiece*.'

The irony is, where our generation is treating 'solitude' as loneliness, something to escape and feel ashamed of, there was a time in history when all the great minds sought solitude to travel inward. Solitude was once a luxury to experience the calmness of the world that lives inside us.

I wholeheartedly believe that this cannot be random. The system around is designed very carefully and after a deep analysis of our basic human nature. We, as humans, do need other humans to feel safe and protected.

That's how we function. And all these giant companies (not to mention social media platforms especially) are designed to keep our *'need for validation'* as the focal point so that they can trap us in the cycle of misery.

The life of Georgia O'Keeffe is living proof of how solitude helps us reach our greatest potential. Look around you and you will observe the people who are setting boundaries and working on their goals/ dreams are the ones who don't have a large group of friends. They are the ones who are alone. Not because they are miserable and pathetic. Because they are choosing to leave the noise behind. And the people who are always ready for a party, another get-together, or just seem to waste time scrolling through social media are the ones who have zero goals with no real connection and a lot of time to pass judgment on who is doing what.

It may sound a little judgemental but tell me if it's not true. People who are up to something, people who are working towards their future or busy creating their art don't have time to feel lonely. Rather they crave to be alone so that they can 'FOCUS.'

FOCUS IS A NEW LUXURY.

In a generation that is happy being distracted and easily manipulated, focus doesn't come easy. And if you think that I am exaggerating then

tell me one thing. Most people are addicted to social media and their mobile phones in general. They all want to know 'how to get rid of mobile addiction' yet the very next day or week, they find themselves swimming in the pool of endless posts and videos that have nothing to offer you.

I mean WHY and HOW?

If you, who is the master of your mind, want to get rid of social media then why are you not able to? If you, who has a mind, want to focus then why are you not able to?

Because as it seems, **YOU ARE NO LONGER CONTROLLING**

YOUR MIND. Your mind is now a device of these giant tech companies that they control as per their wish. I find it so funny and sad at the same time that people are actually searching on YouTube or reading books on

'how to be productive?'

Really? Is that how helpless and powerless you are?

If you really wanted to be productive and get your work done, you would get your ass on your chair and start working. My friend, there is no other quick hack or technique for that. Yet, as it's a generation of fools, we are always looking for quick fixes and hacks to improve our lives.

You might be thinking that Renuka, how does any of it relate to practicing solitude?

Let me tell you one thing. You can never achieve anything good in life if you keep following the rules of others and seek guidance from people who don't know the first thing about you.

Your real guidance is YOU. Your heart knows what needs to be done and your mind is capable enough to figure out 'how.'

But if you keep filling your mind with the thoughts and opinions of others, you will end up becoming and thinking like them. There would not be a single shed of uniqueness in you. You will end up becoming like a copy of the people you listen to on social media and in real life.

That's why they say, *'You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.'*

My question is pretty simple here. If you are the average of the five people you spend the most time with then how will you become an average of yourself if you don't spend any time with yourself? If you become like the person who you spend the most time with then does that mean you are going away from your real self for you don't spend any time with yourself?

Perhaps, artists like Georgia O'Keeffe knew this from the start. They all knew that in order to create real art, they have to become REAL to themselves first. Hence, they choose solitude.

We have already learned why loneliness is not a curse and how we were manipulated into believing so. But you need to learn that Solitude is the only way to create real art. Sure, you and I cannot leave everything and everyone behind and shift to Mexico. But you and I can consciously choose to spend some time with ourselves so that we can become more like ourselves. At least we can touch the reflection of our true personality and experience the luxury of our minds.

Let's first learn how you can practice solitude (and why) and then how you can use your alone to grow yourself.

1. Digest, Reflect, and Reset Okay weird question but tell me honestly, has that ever happened to you that someone presented your favorite food and you ate more than your body could take? And then you felt so stuffed that even breathing became like a task. Now, if someone asks you to walk 10 km in such a situation, would you be able to?

Probably not. And I am speaking this from experience.

Something similar happens with our brains. Excessive eating can make you feel tired, sluggish, or exhausted. And if you eat junk then sometimes it even causes vomiting, stomach ache, or worse food poisoning. All in all, it's very obvious that what you eat, you will produce. In simple words, junk in, junk out. So, it's safe to say that by eating a burger, pizza, and fries every day, you cannot expect to build a healthy body, right?

So, you are smart enough to understand this much. Okay, good.

I expect you also understand that you cannot force your body to eat constantly for 2 hours. I mean, it's a dumb question but I am just making sure that we are on the same page. You eat, you feel stuffed and then you don't eat for another 4-5 hours until you feel hungry

again, right?

Well, then why do you treat your brain like a dustbin? Why do you keep consuming content (either through social media/videos/books) like your brain can take it all consistently for hours? Why do you expect your brain to work creatively when it's so filled with garbage that even thinking straight feels like a task beyond your capacity?

Just as eating junk food doesn't give you abs and a healthy body, similarly, consuming junk-worthy content wouldn't make you any smarter.

And just as you don't feed your body with food for hours, similarly, you cannot feed your brain with information and knowledge or it will extract every bit of mental power and make your brain sluggish or drowsy.

I don't know how to make it simpler but your mind will give you what you give to it. Junk in, junk out. And by consistently feeding your brain for hours, you will end up destroying your basic mental capacity. Just as your body needs the time to digest what you eat, your brain also needs the time to digest what you consume.

And that time is the period of 'conscious solitude' where you choose to sit alone to let your brain digest whatever you consumed without any disturbance or external noise. There is so much information and content out there, so much advice and hacks, and so

many people and their own different opinions and perceptions that if you don't put a break on it, you will end up drowning in this vast sea. We are constantly consuming information from the outside world. But we never give our minds enough rest to digest what we have consumed. You are surrounded by so much information, opinions, and data that even you don't know what's entering in your mind. We listen to something powerful or something said powerfully and start believing it without using our brains. It doesn't matter what the content is, positive or negative. What matters is YOU DON'T THINK ANYMORE. YouTubers, Podcasters, Authors, or Social media influencers are also people, not God. Hence, it is not essential that what they say is correct or suitable for your life. Eliminate what doesn't make sense to you. Don't just consume content and say, *'Oh my god, what a video or what a podcast'*

THINK BEFORE YOU LET ANY ADVICE OR THOUGHT TO SIT

IN YOUR MIND.

If you never leave your mind alone and constantly fill it with garbage and others' opinions, you will be nothing but a collection of your external world. There is a world inside you too that you need to travel and explore.

Your mind has a unique thought process and opinions as well that you should pay attention to. Tell me, if you never sit alone to listen to the voice inside you, how will you ever know what is going on inside you?

The thoughts that enter your mind when you are alone and disconnected from the world are the thoughts that actually reflect who you are, what matters to you, and what's your thought process.

Sitting alone is tough. I know. Especially for people who have a great deal of practice in laughing at stupid TikTok videos that wouldn't matter after a second. You have trained your mind to live on cheap entertainment.

You have trained your mind to numb itself as you waste another 2 hours scrolling social media. You don't feel tired when you see your mobile screen for hours but you feel tired when it comes to studying, learning new things, or working on the real stuff. Then you feel distracted. Why?

Because that's how things are designed. You don't need to focus on laughing at stupid jokes you see on social media or be lost among trending videos. That's why it's easier to enjoy social media. And that's the same reason why your mental muscles are getting weaker.

"You and I are practicing every day to not practice focus."

Read that again.

All I can say is, sitting alone will be tough initially. But it is the need of the hour as well. You need to give your brain the time to digest what you consumed. Reflect on what is important and delete what's not. So that there is enough space again to feed your brain again. You need to give your mind the time to reset and let it be alone for a while to create your own world that is unique, artistic, and known only to you. You need to choose to sit in solitude, feeling the freedom that comes with your company, and let your mind take some rest from the noise of the external world. Otherwise, as I said earlier, you will end up becoming an average of your surroundings.

The time you spend with yourself will help you to filter out the

garbage, curate your own opinions, analyze your thoughts and study your beliefs. In simple words,

“Detox your brain every day.”

2. The Art of Getting Bored

When I was starting my journey as a writer, I used to watch and read the interviews of famous authors. And one thing was common in all of them.

They all said the best ideas come into their mind when they are not looking for them or not doing anything at all. It’s not just the authors but if you ask any creative or artistic person, you will get the same answer. And I always thought that it was impossible until it happened to me.

We are always busy. One task after another. One email after another.

One video after another. One thought after another. The cycle never ends.

We never take a pause to reflect on who we are becoming, what we are losing, what we are thinking, or what our thought process is. When you are just taking outside information without thinking about what you are consuming, you end up doing, thinking, and becoming like your surroundings. And then you complain about not having creative ideas.

When I started spending more time alone, I gave my mind much-needed rest to relax and recharge while decluttering the unnecessary information my mind has stored. And trust me, in the most unexpected moments, I started getting such beautiful ideas that I never thought were possible for a person like me (I used to think I am dumb so…)

It is the relaxed mind that generates more ideas than a stuffed mind which is so full that it might throw up (in the form of stress). If you keep feeding your brain with something all the time then you are leaving no room for your brain to digest that information. It’s proven that your brain needs time to process that information. And when there is no gap, it all becomes a mess in the brain. That’s the reason why some people feel tired all the time and why they cannot focus and why creativity seems to be far from their reach.

In a world filled with major stressors and to-do lists, it can be difficult

finding time to just do, well, absolutely nothing. And this is the biggest reason why you should find some time to do nothing. In Eat, Pray, and Love by Elizabeth Gilbert, she introduces an Italian concept: **Dolce Far Niente,**

'the sweetness of doing nothing.'

Doing nothing means doing absolutely nothing. No mobile or social media. No book or gossiping. Just you in the moment with no hidden purpose. It means slowing down, without hurling your mind in multiple directions, and just being. The sweetness of doing nothing or the art of getting bored is somewhat similar to me. Our world is full of cheap

entertainment. As soon as you feel bored, you open Netflix or watch a bunch of people dancing or doing weird acts on social media. All in all, entertainment is at your fingertips and you access it at any time. But that is making you weak and numb.

We wear busy as a badge of honor. If we are not working, we are doing personal development, traveling, being productive, starting businesses, learning, growing, creating, etc.

And not being busy feels scary. For some people it means that they have to meet themselves face to face, for others, it means not feeling worthy, some can't handle not being perfect and useful. When we have free time it just doesn't feel right.

We have learned to either silence or numb our brains. We either throw short-term pleasure or entertainment or a big to-do list on our faces so that we are always busy. But what we don't realize is that **'getting bored is an art.'**

In a world where you have thousands of options at your fingertips to enjoy, it's an art to know how to feel completely satisfied with doing nothing. Not only do you put a full stop to unnecessary content and give your mind the much-needed relaxation when you consciously choose to do nothing but you also learn how to gain self-control. Most people go back to their toxic ex or friends because they cannot bear the thought of having no fun in life. People feel boredom so they accept the bare minimum from others. But WHY?

Getting bored is more like a form of meditation. You do nothing. You sit alone with yourself. The only condition is to be aware of your mind. Don't let your mind slip back to negative thinking or self-sabotaging. You learn to control your mind. You learn to control your

desire to be with others. You learn to control your desire for cheap entertainment. You learn to not give up on short-term pleasure. This builds self-control. You learn how to be bored like an artist. And then your mind rewards you with the most amazing creative ideas. The kind of ideas that you never expected.

You cannot get out-of-the-world ideas when you are spending all your time doing something and not letting your brain communicate with you.

You wouldn't get creative ideas just on your first day of practicing the art of getting bored. The first day will feel like a total waste of time and probably you will curse me. Your mind will play tricks on you reminding you why you are not enough or something bad from your past and before

you know your time of getting bored will turn into overthinking. But that's where you need to learn to be an artist.

As you practice the art of getting bored, you leave your mind free to wander the distinct world inside you while being fully-completely-absolutely aware of where your mind is leading you. Just when you realize that your mind is dragging you down, you take back control and perhaps, consciously choose to think about something else that relaxes your mind.

It's an art so it will take time. But not only will it make you more creative, but it will also teach you how to become the master of your mind, how to control your desires, and become more patient and calm like water.

3. Learn to Belong to Yourself:

"Knowing how to belong to yourself is an art in a world where everyone is finding their home in others."

I might sound a little rude but here is a truth about life,

'Nothing stays forever.'

People who you love today will leave you or you might have to leave them or they might change. People cannot stay by your side 24/7. We have built a world where chasing success requires going miles away from family and friends. Shifting to a new city for a new job or leaving home for college. Life and people change. Our priorities change.

And in that case, **if you never learned 'how to belong to yourself,'**

you will end up feeling lonely every time someone leaves you.

You should keep your heart open for your loved ones so they can walk in and make you feel loved. You should enjoy the company of those you love. But you should also learn *'how to enjoy your own company.'*

For example; One of my friends has been in a relationship for the past 5

years. Her life revolves around her boyfriend. Her boyfriend had to shift to another city which is about a 12 hours drive away from her. She called me yesterday and said, *'I don't know what to do without him. My life revolves around him and now that he is away, I feel so empty.'*

I will say the same thing to you that I said to her.

"Make your life like a garden where you have all types of people and interests and hobbies so that you always have something or someone to love and receive love. Have friends you adore, enjoy the hobbies you are passionate about, water your plants, and love your pets. Create things and build that relationship around you that keeps you excited so that love is always around you in every form. Life will be more colorful that way"

Learn to belong to yourself without feeling the need to be with others.

Where there is a need, there is a settlement. You will settle down for less.

But when you are satisfied with yourself, being with others wouldn't come out of your desperation but rather a real and genuine connection based on love and care for one another. People you can select rather than living at the mercy of others to be selected.

And if you want to learn how to be satisfied with your own life and build a life that makes you feel proud of yourself, let's learn to use your

alone time to turn into your growth time. Shall we?

Chapter 6 - Turn Loneliness Into Growth Period

The other day I was reading Garden Spells and I really liked a quote from the book that says, *"You are who you are, whether you like it or*

not, so why not like it?"

I believe this quote holds true in all areas of our life.

You are alone, whether you like it or not, so why not like it?

And if you cannot find a reason to like it, then create some. You cannot expect life to throw reasons for you to be happy, cheerful, and successful. If you want something, you go get it.

When I came back to my hometown after college, I knew nothing. I didn't know what my passion was and how I was going to make a living out of it. I was alone, desperate to achieve something without having any specific skill set with societal pressure hanging on my head 24/7 to prove my worth and absolutely no one to talk to share how I was feeling. During those few weeks, I was so consumed by self-doubts and pity.

Today when I am writing this book, if I look back, I can see that **the only person who was missing from my side was ME.**

And it's not just the case with me but you as well.

When it comes to supporting others, we stand tall with them. When it comes to encouraging others, we somehow give a perfect speech that is worthy of featuring in a TedTalk. When it comes to bringing others back to the positive side of life, we all become part-time motivational speakers.

However, when it's time to support ourselves, we somehow manage to leave every bit of *'Gyan'* behind and push ourselves into a dark tunnel of self-sabotaging.

Why you and I don't have enough courage to stand by ourselves? Why has no one taught us to first be our friends?

Well, if no one else, then today let me tell you how to be your friend and how you can use your alone time to turn it into your growth period.

Chapter 7 - Make a New Best Bud

I am in my 20s and as per the standard set by society, I am supposed to just have fun, date random guys, dance to a song that I don't understand, and call it LIVING LIFE.

But hey, I don't want any of this. I am the kind of person who wants to be successful, have everything I set my mind on, and make money but at the same time, I wish to live a slow life in a small village in Scotland. Quite amazing, right?

However, as I said, **the path to success is lonely** and you can either choose to hang out with your friends every other day or you can be focused to achieve your goals. Your friends may not have similar goals as you. Or when you want to study and they want to have fun, you need to choose one.

Just to be clear, I didn't have much of a choice after coming back to my hometown so obviously, I settled with the latter option. I decided to dedicate myself to my goals. I decided to live for my dreams. I decided to turn my imaginary world into my reality. I decided to make friends with a friend who will last as long as I want. A friend who will help me get closer to my goals. A friend who will make me feel important and confident every day. And I still have that friend with me at every stage of life. It's tough to maintain the friendship but it's worth every effort. And I am asking you to become friends with my friend as well. You will be 10x happier than you are now. Wanna know who that new friend is?

I am asking you to **become friends with your GOALS and dreams, with success and achievements.** I am asking you to start fresh with yourself. I am asking you to look at your alone time through the lens of a highly successful person and think about how they will use their time. And if you think about it, it's neither loneliness nor solitude. It's just time. How you view it will decide what kind of label to put on it. And that label depends on your mindset.

So, yes I am asking you to change your mindset. Transform your perception of loneliness. Look at it with the lens of your own future version who is highly successful and expecting you to use this TIME to grow yourself, work on your dreams, get closer to your dreamland one step at a time, and feel empowered as you think what all can you do for yourself in your alone time. It's honestly that simple.

Just as I said at the start of the chapter, being alone is your reality now, so why not change it into something where you start loving your solitude?

Why don't you turn it into something that being alone feels like an opportunity, a luxury, a lifestyle that helps you level up your game?

So, yes, I am asking you to **be friends with success**. I am asking you to **make your dreams your BEST BUD.** Start a self-improvement streak with your new friend and with every step toward your goals, every small achievement will be like adding a new memory to your list.

And it may all sound inspiring to you, the question comes back to HOW? How and where should you start? Well, once you are ready to be friends with success, flip the page, and let's make some efforts to get the attention of your new buddy.

Chapter 8 - Building a Dream Life Plan

"If you don't know where you want to go, how will you ever reach there?"

Everyone wants to become successful. Everyone wants to live their dream life. Everyone wishes to achieve something big. Everyone wants to leave a dent in the universe.

But if I ask you (or you ask anyone around you), what success looks like to you, either you wouldn't have an answer or you will say *'Well, I want to make a lot of money, live in a nice luxurious house, give my parents and loved ones a comfortable life, travel across the world and be happy.'*

How funny and sad at the same time. If all of us are different then how can our dream life look exactly the same?

Because **we are clowns**. Oh, I am sorry if that sounded harsh but I meant to sound a little truthful. You and I are manipulated into believing that success means a big house, lots of money, and aesthetic pictures from vacations. And don't worry I am not one of those people who will tell you that there is something

wrong with dreaming about making money. No. Darling, I love money.

But!

The problem is you and I are behaving like clowns. **We are following everything that people in power want to make us do**. We think if we don't have what everyone has then we are missing out and our next goal should be to achieve that one Chanel bag, one trip to Italy, one beautiful partner who proposes to you in front of the Eiffel Tower, a cute baby who is more intelligent than anyone else's and more bullshit like this.

The problem is not that we wish to have certain things. The problem is we wish to have something that everyone has so that we don't seem poor, stupid, or weird. **The problem is that we are making our lives a collection of cheap dreams that everyone imagines and materialistic shit that everyone else possesses.** The problem is we don't ask ourselves what do we want in life, we try to copy the most successful person around us so that we can also become *'successful.'*

And I call all of it **a well-designed system that has robbed us of our basic capability to think**. And just in case, you want the proof; You say you want to make a lot of money to become successful. Okay, darling. How much money do you need to be able to come to peace with yourself? How much money is enough for you to call yourself successful?

Do you have any plans to get one percentage closer to that goal? If your dream is to make $10,000/month then do you have any plans to make your first $100? Or do you just think that one day magically you will be able to jump from zero to $10,000? And if you do believe in this magic, do you have any tricks or hacks to turn this magic into reality?

And you know what, let's say that you are a saint and your goal is not to make money but to find peace and mental stillness in life. Okay, honey.

What do you do for mental stability? Do you meditate and for how long?

Do you meditate once in a while just to curse your brain for throwing thousands of thoughts at you or do you meditate every day at a fixed time whilst following a fixed mantra/guidance? Do you journal or do you just overthink about how your life is a mess?

See, I don't have any intention to make you feel bad. I am just introducing you to YOUR REALITY. You are living in a bubble if you think that just by imagining and wishing to become 'successful', you will become one, that too when you don't know what success means to you.

This right here is the reason why you need to be alone. Even if you have some good people around you and your life is all happy and merry, **you should take some time every day to be ALONE so that you can think independently without the influence of anyone.** Remember what I said earlier in the first part? When you are alone,

you are dealing with just one mind, one opinion, and one perspective. And since you have never been alone or at least never embraced it, you don't know what you think about anything. You are following and accepting whatever the world throws at you.

This is one of the reasons I started spending more time alone. When you spend time alone, it is only then you will come up to know what your soul truly desires. When your soul speaks to you, it speaks with no manipulation, hence you get to know what you truly desire. I was done with asking people to guide me. I was one of those people who could never make a decision on my own. I was so underconfident about my opinions that if I had two

choices before me, I would spend eternity just to pick one. I have been there. I always sought people to tell me what was good for me.

When I found myself alone with a pool of decisions that were waiting for me, I realized how dependent I was. I realized that I don't trust myself enough to make decisions confidently. And how I wish it was restricted to only me.

The core reason why we follow the crowd is that **we don't trust our decisions and choices.** We are afraid at every step so it feels safer to trust the crowd. We don't choose to walk on a new path because it seems less crowded or rather alone.

But enough is enough. Aren't you tired of wishing to be like everybody else? Aren't you done with keeping up with this race of looking beautiful where beauty has such a vague yet same definition for all? Aren't you exhausted with trying to achieve success when you aren't enjoying the process in your day-to-day life?

And most importantly, aren't you afraid that you will waste your entire life doing what everyone did just to realize that you never lived or did anything that you wanted?

If you take just one thing from this book, remember this,

"Learn to define your definition of everything.

Don't make your life a wishlist of what you think everyone has."

Define Your Definitions

"When you don't know what you want then you want to have everything that is glittery and shiny."

God was kind enough to bless all of us with a personal brain yet here we are. We have switched off our brains and blindly follow what the world expects us to do. And then we wonder, *'why am I not happy even when I have everything I dreamt of? Maybe I should make a gratitude list just like everyone suggests to count my blessings and remind myself how lucky I am.'*

Darling, it's time to switch on the button of your brain so that your inner light can guide you.

And how are we going to do that?

Well, simple enough. Just as we have practiced following the rules and fixed definitions of society, now we will learn to create our personal rules and definition of everything. I mean, it's ironic how people always find something to give a personal touch to, even coffee mugs, but forget about their life. But better late than never, right?

A few days ago, I shared a post on my Instagram account about finding joy in your day-to-day life. And

one person commented that, and I quote, *'still I don't understand what should I do for my happiness'*

This shows how much distance we have grown from ourselves. ***In the***

race of finding people, we lost ourselves. And if you are expecting that I can give you some hacks or techniques to help you find your happiness or success then I am sorry, you are free to burn this book. I cannot tell you what to do. I don't know who you are, what's your history, what makes your heart beat faster with excitement, what feels joy to every nerve of your body. I don't know any of it. No one knows. And even if I tell you a few hacks then maybe you will give this book 5 stars and feel motivated at the moment. But after a few days, you will forget about it. Why? Because it didn't come from you so it didn't fit in your life.

You need to sit down and start defining things for yourself. Do you want to be happy? Great, what does happiness mean to you? Dig deeper and figure out what are the things that make you happy and how you can add a little dose of happiness to your day-to-day life. Don't find your happiness on YouTube or in any book. Find it in your heart. Do you want to be successful? Fantastic. Now ask yourself what does success mean to me?

What is your definition of success and how do you imagine living your

successful life? Are you successful professionally or do you want success in all areas of your life? Let your definition of success be your compass. You cannot build your life by walking in someone else's footprints. Your life is your treasure. Your life belongs in your hands. You should take charge and start defining everything for yourself. Enough of living like a slave who blindly follows everything. You might not be the actual king/queen of the world but your life depends on your actions so act like you OWN it. Take your own decisions. Build your definition of everything. Think before you accept anything from society. Use the brain that God has blessed you with.

Look within and find your true guidance. It's time you become the OWNER

of your life. It's time you give a personalized touch to your life. And it starts now.

Chapter 9 - The Action Plan

You cannot build your dream life until you don't know what you don't like about your life right now. You want to change your life. Well, darling everyone does. But the big question is WHY?

Can you give me 2 reasons why you want to change your life? What is something you hate about yourself or your life that is itching you to change your life?

If you cannot come up with 2 strong reasons then all of this will just feel like a motivational speech to you which you will forget in the next 2 days.

Without knowing what you want to change, what will you work towards to change?

You need to sit down and make a conscious list of *'what are some of the things you don't like in yourself or your life.'* Knowing what needs to be changed is the first step toward your dream life. It's obvious that your dream life looks different than your current life. That's why we call it

'dream life' so ask yourself what is the difference between your dream life and your current life. Not only the professional difference but dig deeper and analyze differences in each area of your life. When I say each area, I mean personal, professional, emotional,

and mental state differences. When I say each area of your life, I mean what your dream day-to-day life looks like. It's not a sudden magical

ONE-DAY thing. **To be able to create your dream life ONE DAY, you will have to act like your dream version every day.** Read that again until it sinks deep within your soul.

Life doesn't change one day magically, YOU CHANGE HOW YOU

LIVE EVERY DAY.

So, let me say it again,

Take a pause. Sit down at a quiet place. Take a piece of paper and write down 5 things that you don't like in your life right now. Whether it's your current job or your sleeping schedule. No one is coming to make that list for you. You need to do that for yourself TODAY or wait until you are 70 to regret the life you lived.

You cannot become the person of your dreams if you don't imagine what your dream version looks like and if you don't know what is wrong with your current version.

And let me tell you a secret. It's okay to be harsh on yourself sometimes. Because extreme self-love can take you away from reality, you will start living in an imaginary bubble. We don't want that. We want to love who we are and be excited about who we are in the process of becoming.

So, be honest with yourself. Don't pretend that ' *ohh, I am the perfect person and there is nothing wrong in my life.'* Nope, darling. That's toxic self-love. Your deeper inner self knows what you are capable of and how you are living less than your real potential. This gap creates self-loathing.

And this gap can be filled by starting to become honest with ourselves.

Be Honest With Yourself

Before you demand anything from others, learn to be honest with yourself. Have the courage to accept that you were the one killing all your dreams. Stand tall against the lies your brain might want to throw at you.

You will meet enough people in your life who will say one thing but their actions won't match. You will meet a lot of people who are going to lie to you. While you cannot control how others treat you, you can learn to be honest with yourself. Deep down you always know what's best for you, you can sense when to leave a person because you are

just being used, you realize when you did wrong and when you were wronged yet just stay in your comfort zone and keep things as they are, your brain will play tricks on you. You will make great excuses to convince yourself not to start working, give a person another chance, or keep eating junk food until Monday. That's because honesty with yourself is the toughest thing. You get to live your worst fears and are left with no option but to work to improve things. Yet honesty with yourself will make your life way more satisfying.

You will be happy knowing you did what was best for you. That's where self-satisfaction starts.

Step 1: The Power of One Thing One of the biggest mistakes we make while trying to improve ourselves is that we focus on everything at once.

We try to hit the gym every day, make a gratitude list every day, eat healthy every day, and the like. And focusing on everything at once drags us down to a level where we find ourselves giving up on everything and later accusing ourselves of being a failure. You cannot change everything at once. And if you try to, you will just burn yourself. You will make the journey toxic and suffocating for yourself. And even after working so hard, when you don’t get results in any of the areas, you just give up on everything. And what does that do? It lowers your self-respect. You start thinking that you can never achieve anything good in life.

The catch is to **focus on one thing at a time.**

Why?

Because changing one thing in your routine is easier. It easily sinks in.

And when you start seeing the result in one area, not only do you feel happy but your self-respect increases too. You get the confidence for trying to improve more things in your life.

For example; In 2020, I resigned from my job in the hope that I will become a successful freelancer. I tried and failed. For months, I didn’t get a single client. I was depressed and had no means to pay my bills. That was the time when all my college mates were earning great money, having vacations, and buying stuff with their own money. I was jealous and I just wanted to prove to myself that I am moving forward.

So, I started writing on Medium which is a platform for writers. I

didn't have any hopes from Medium. I just wanted to prove to myself that I am doing something *at least.* I had the goal of writing one article every day.

10 months later, I had 10,000 followers. And that wasn't enough. I received so much from my audience that it boosted my confidence. I started viewing myself as a loved writer. I always believed in the power of words but after receiving so much love on Medium, I started believing in the power of MY

words. And that's how I ended up writing my first book, "The Wounds of My Words." It still feels like a dream. An illusion. If someone had told my 10-year-old version that I will be an author one day, my little version would have laughed. In fact, if someone had told me in 2020 that I will be an author one day, I would have become even

more depressed that you are making fun of my situation. I didn't consider myself a good writer. But

now, oh God, I cannot believe I am writing my second book.

It all happened because I made one decision two years back. And it wasn't just a decision. It was an action. One action every day for 10 months transformed me from an under confident writer to a loved author.

I want you to do the same. Forget about big sudden changes. Forget the hope of magic. Take out that list you made earlier (about what you don't like in your life right now) and pick ONE BIG ISSUE from that list.

What do I mean by one big issue?

Well, back in 2020, a lot of things were going wrong in my life. I wasn't in good shape. I had skin allergies all over my body. I didn't have any idea where my career was going. And all of it dragged my mental health down.

See, you need to understand one important thing here.

People will ask you to work on your mental health as if it's homework from your school teacher. Your mental health is a result of the current state of your life. If something is going wrong in your life then mentally you will feel stressed, depressed, or anxious. The bigger the issue, the more stressed you will feel. In my case,

my career was my biggest concern. My second job was quite toxic and my boss used to yell at me every now and then. She used to say that I can never make it as a writer. I was doing the work of an intern there. And when I left my job in the hope of a brighter future just to find myself struggling to get clients, my boss's words started ringing in my head like an alarm. I started believing her words as truth. I started questioning my worth. And all of it made me depressed.

After reading over 200 books, if there is anything that I have understood, its - **action is the cure of almost everything.**

So, I decided to jump on Medium. Now, you know how the rest of it goes.

You will find a lot of flaws in how you are living today. There might be a bunch of things that you don't like about your life at the moment. But you need to understand that you are not a magician. You cannot make everything work at once. You need to become an essentialist here.

Choose the ONE BIGGEST ISSUE you are facing in your life right now. What is that ONE thing which keeps pulling you down? What is that one area of your life that makes you feel anxious and stressed? What is that

one aspect of your life that makes you feel stuck in one place?

Identify that ONE BIG ISSUE. In fact, this one big issue can be the reason why you don't like to be alone. You know that as soon as you are alone, your mind will send you notifications of what's wrong in your life.

You know that when you are with yourself with nothing to do, your mind will pull you back reminding you that your life sucks.

You will feel the itch to change and improve everything at once. But remember that you are a human. You cannot focus on multiple things at once with similar efficiency. When you are focused on improving one thing, not only it becomes easier to measure your performance but you also feel excited. You don't feel the pressure of changing your world in one day.

Now, I would suggest you close the book for a while, and take some time to identify that ONE BIG ISSUE because next, we will discuss how you can work on that one area.

Step 2: ONE BIG ACTION

After deciding which area of your life needs more attention, it's time to take ACTION. But the question is where to start. Most people make the mistake of randomly starting out of motivation and by the next week, they feel clueless. It used to happen to me all the time. In the past, I tried to

adopt a healthier lifestyle. I would feel motivated and decide *'You know what, I am gonna become healthier this year.'*

Well, in less than a week, I would find myself stuffing fries and pizza in my mouth whilst watching a hot romantic movie on Netflix.

But as I shared earlier, when I started writing on Medium, I had just one goal. And that goal was based on ACTION. From the very first day, I was clear. I even wrote this on my Whatsapp group (where only I am added. It's a great hack. Make a group only for yourself and send yourself messages.

Messages that you would like to receive from others. Messages that you can send to your current self to calm down and think straight or maybe a few things as a reminder) that my goal is to write one article every day. And I never made any Excel sheet or bought any cute templates or any aesthetic looking journal to track my progress. Do you know WHY?

Because I didn't overburden myself. How tough is it to track one ACTION? One article every day. Either I wrote or I didn't. Simple, right?

You need to understand that setting big goals that sound cool and energetic is fine. It shows your enthusiasm but it also represents that you are out of your mind. People set goals all the time. They keep making giant promises to themselves only to make excuses in the end. And then they expect other people to stay and fulfill their promises. God, we are kidding ourselves.

I want you to take a breath, get patient, and focus on what I am saying.

This one thing will seriously change the way you look at your goals and your working system. Instead of setting vague goals. Focus on setting **ACTION GOALS**.

What Are Action Goals?

Action goals mean you know what you will be doing to achieve your dream life. Action goal defines clear-cut what you are supposed to do every day to get one step closer to your destination.

When I set an action goal, I made it clear that my target is to WRITE, which is an action, every day, which defines how often am I supposed to take the action.

Now, it's your turn. Again, don't overwork yourself. Take out a piece of paper and write in front of that BIG ISSUE, ONE ACTION GOAL. Yes, make it clear enough for yourself what's the one action you will perform every day to get closer to your destination. And then no matter what, DO

IT.

Step 3: Know Your Nature & Sync Your Activities

One of the basic things about human nature is, *the more you force yourself into doing something, the more you will feel low and depressed*.

Like it's imposed on you.

In the past whenever I had tried to follow great habits and cute-looking routines, I always failed. One of the habits that I always wanted to adopt was waking up at 5 AM. I wholeheartedly believe there are tons of benefits to waking up early. I even read Robin Sharma's book *'The 5 AM Club'* and hands down, what an amazing book. Then I also read *'The Miracle Morning'* and it was a good book. I watched a lot of YouTube videos as well on *'how to wake up early'* and other creator's' *'early morning routine'*

just so I could learn to wake up early.

But nothing worked for me. I tried and failed. Multiple times. My mom even calls me a *'sleeping beauty.'*

Though the big question was WHY? Why did I try so hard to wake up early? And not just that, I used to curse myself for sleeping till late. But then I came across the concept of the body clock that differs for each individual. In brief, your biological clock controls when you work the best. In simple words, not everyone is meant to be an early riser. Some people work best at night while others prefer the morning time.

And after studying more about the concept and my own body, I

realized that I am not an early riser. I work best during the night. I feel most creative at night time. And if my goal was to get as much as done then why the hell was I forcing myself to wake up early? Now that I know when I work best, instead of cursing myself to follow the most followed routine by everyone else, I work when I feel like it.

Now, why am I telling you this?

The thing is, everyone starts self-improvement projects. Everyone sets goals. But the majority of them give up. I used to give up as well. And I am sure in the past you must have given up on your goals as well. *Why?*

Because it starts feeling like a punishment after a few days. Initially, when we are working on the dose of motivation, it feels good. But as soon as motivation evaporates, we give up. It feels exhausting, not exciting.

All of it is because ***everyone is different and everyone likes to work***

differently. If you force yourself to apply someone else's solutions, you

will lose the grip on your own life.

Working on our goals should be fun and exciting, not exhausting. Now to make it fun, we need to allow ourselves to be flexible. To free ourselves from traditional methods of achieving goals. You need to dig in and find out how you like to work and what time you work the best. You must feel empowered whenever you take action on your goals.

One of my goals for 2023 is to focus on my journey as an author. My big action goal was to write 10 pages every day. I don't sit down to write first thing in the morning as most people recommend. Because in my opinion, you cannot write if you don't want to. Writing, to me, is not about a routine but music to my heart. You cannot force yourself to listen to music. So instead of forcing myself to write first thing in the morning, I write whenever I feel like it. That's how it's more fun to me.

Another example from my life would be, I always wanted to stay fit. I used to set the target of hitting the gym every day and imagine myself getting in shape. But it never lasted for more than a week or two. So this year, I set the goal to move my body every day but how I do it is on me not on what is cool and famous. I sometimes prefer to dance

and do yoga while other times, I just wake up early and go cycling for 10-12 km. That's how I want to work.

Do you see the difference?

I am moving towards my goals every day but in a way I want. I am not forcing myself to do a certain thing in a certain way. It's my life. And I will achieve my goals in ways I prefer comfortable in.

And I would suggest you do the same. Instead of making things a burden for you, **make things fun. Shake it up a bit. Focus on what you would like to do today and how can you make even the mundane things fun?**

The point is you don't remain the same. You evolve. Your preference changes and your working style changes. And what worked for you yesterday may not work for you tomorrow.

Now go ahead, and summarize this chapter to set your actionable goals for yourself and start your self-improvement streak TODAY.

Chapter 10 - Make Your Alone Time Addictive Why do you love to spend time with people you love while hate being around certain people?

Because time flies with the people you love and the people who love you. They make their presence addictive for you. They share so much love, compassion, laughter and secrets, and hugs that you look forward to these things, don't you? And when you are not with them, you miss all these sweet little things.

Similarly, you don't like being around certain people because, with them, time becomes the devil. They don't get you. They have nothing to offer you, no love or any similar interest.

If you didn't get what I am trying to say here, let me put it straightforwardly. The reason you don't like spending time with yourself is that your relationship with yourself falls into the second category. **You have nothing to offer yourself, no love or no joy.**

As I shared, when I came back to my hometown, my school friends didn't want to keep in touch with me. However, now they message me to ask me if I would like to hang out. I don't know what changed. But now, I don't want to go with them. I feel so comfortable and happy and peaceful at my home doing my own stuff that I don't have any interest in becoming someone's doll. Old Renuka would have gone but

not me. Why?

Because I have more interesting things to do. I have created other ways to entertain myself. I have transformed my alone time from miserable to ADDICTIVE. And I want you to do something similar as well.

How?

Let's discuss that.

1. Create Multiple Sources of Joy There are a lot of wishes that are buried in your heart. Things that you always wanted to try but you never get the time for. Any specific hobby or skill that you wanted to adopt but you never had *'free time'* except you always had an abundance of time to scroll through social media or watch Netflix on loop. You just didn't have the time to DO what your heart carved.

As children, we were so excited to try new things or play new games without worrying about perfection or productivity. But as we started becoming an adult, a load of responsibility, the burden of becoming successful, and the need to prove our worth eliminated every single joy from our lives. Some hobbies used to set our hearts on fire which today are not a part of our lives. There were picnic spots that we used to feel excited about but today we sit on our sofa all day just to complain we have nowhere to go. How did that happen?

Perhaps, as kids, we were fine with exploring the little joys of life. Kids find a way to entertain themselves. That's why they are happiest at almost all times. They know how to make themselves happy. However, adults are mostly sad. Because we expect others to come and entertain us. And when no one comes, we end up feeling lonely.

If I ask you, **what is the one thing you do every day to make yourself happy, what would you say?**

Hard to answer. I know, I have been there as well. It's easier to expect the world to be our cheerleader. But it's hard to look in the mirror and question what we do for ourselves. No wonder, we feel lonely.

But hey, I am not your mom so it's not my job to yell at you.

I understand that being an adult is not easy. It's just a lot. You have to take care of everything all at once whilst taking care of yourself too. But the thing is, it doesn't matter how hard you try, how much you work, and how overworked you feel at the end of the day. What

matters is do you even do one single task in your day that makes you feel satisfied? **We don't feel exhausted because we try too hard. We feel exhausted because we do too little of what truly makes us happy.** So perhaps, if you do even just ONE thing intentionally that makes you feel connected to yourself, to your inner child then life will start feeling like a joy. We must have at least one thing in our day-to-day life that we are excited about, something to look

forward to. Joy wouldn't come looking for you. It's you who has to find it and if you cannot find then CREATE the sources of joy in your life. There is a lot

that you will have to do to survive, and to get ahead in life. Make sure you do something every day so joy doesn't leave behind. Make your life joyful, not just bearable on the mercy of weekends.

And I know it's easier said than done but enough of making excuses for not trying something you always wanted to. Your inner self has been waiting forever for you to catch up on life and start doing things that matter to you. You have waited enough for others and the world to bring joy to your life, now it's your turn to intentionally create a joyful life. Not a happy life. But a joyful life. Happiness is a cheap thing. Joy makes life rich. And the good thing is, you can always find at least one source of joy in your life if you look for it intentionally.

But why am I using the word intentionally repetitively?

Because it's easier to slip back to your default setting and blame the world for everything that goes wrong in your life. But when you take the responsibility in your hands, and look for something to fill your day with JOY with complete awareness, you will find that almost everything turns into fun when you do it with full self-awareness. It could be as small as the smell of your morning tea, the rays of sunshine kissing your cheeks, or the way some stranger looked at you. It's in

the small moments that you can find joy hidden for you to find it. Play with it. Joy is hidden playing hide-n-seek with you. It's your task to find it somewhere deep inside your heart.

To give you an example from my life, I always hated my hometown because it's too small. My city is so small that it doesn't have anything that I enjoy. We don't have any park (God, I love nature but duh..), no library (I am a book lover), no bookstore, and absolutely no art galleries. But if I had waited for these things to improve, I still would

have been waiting. So instead of playing the blame game or victimizing my character, I choose to create sources of joy with what I already had. I started taking evening walks in the narrow streets of my city. I don't expect much from my evening walks. I just expect to take a pause. A break from a world where everyone is rushing to win the race of life. These evening walks allow me to renew my perception and look at my own city with awe. Pay attention to things that were invisible to my eyes before. Find a little piece of history in some

of the old houses and their mysterious doors. Look at the same faces doing the same monotonous things but notice something that may surprise me.

That's the reason I chose talking walks in the evening. I wanted to look at people and observe them for a split second before I wandered into my mind.

I wanted to become a part of someone's life secretly. To this day, my evening walks are something I look forward to, whether I am in my hometown or somewhere else. This is what keeps me excited throughout the day, especially in the afternoon when I feel tired and sleepy. I feel excited to take a pause and see something that I never paid attention to. It's so small and probably insignificant to most but it matters to me. It helps me to unwind and take a break from worldly pressure.

And I strongly suggest you try to find joy in little things. Maybe drink your morning coffee while listening to your favorite music and without rushing the entire process. Maybe cook your food with a candle and romantic songs to accompany you.

Your heart already knows where joy lies for you. Follow your heart's guidance and let it lead you to create a joyful day-to-day life.

The point is **either you find joy or the worry finds you.**

2. Learn NEW Skills & Challenge Yourself: I always wanted to learn swimming, calligraphy, and the German language. And there are endless things that I still want to learn. In fact, sometimes I feel this burning desire in my heart to learn new things. But I never paid much attention to my desire for learning new skills because a) who has the TIME and b) I….answer is loading

I don't know why we wait our entire life to try something new or feel scared to learn new things. We somehow manage to waste hours on

social media but it becomes tough to spare 15 minutes every day to dedicate to a new skill. We are living in a world where learning anything new is as easy as opening YouTube without paying a single buck. All the resources are available at our fingertips for FREE yet we find some excuses or rather lies to throw at our own faces.

How very generous!!

I always wondered if I really want to learn all these things then what is stopping me? I waited for an answer just to realize that I have been fooling myself all this time.

We all have time. Time is not the issue if you truly want to do something. The issue is your habit of making silly excuses. Not even excuses. Your habit of lying to yourself with perfection as if you will receive an award for it.

In the past year, I have learned three new skills. The recent one was something that I wanted to learn since I was 16. I started learning

'crocheting' almost a few months back. Now that I know it, I feel super excited every day to make something new. I keep watching YouTube videos on how to crochet a bag or save cute crochet tops on Pinterest. It all feels exciting. I feel that I have a life beyond my work. With every new thing I make, I feel like I am growing. It feels exciting to know that I am learning something that I always wanted to. I feel excited to know that this can turn into something unexpected. In fact, yesterday, I was trying to sleep but all I could think of was trying a new pattern of crocheting so I got up and started crocheting.

I understand that you might not have time to try or learn new things. But then you can take at least 15–20 minutes every day if you try not for anyone else but for YOURSELF.

I can only suggest you make your life exciting. Learn something new that you always wanted to. Maybe

knitting or swimming or a new language. It will take time to master a new skill but the process will fill your day-to-day life with excitement. Your mind will be awake again. You will start having creative ideas. And all of it will feel like a perfect life. So, give it a try.

Make your alone time addictive by learning something, and doing things that you like. Try something that you always wanted to do. Ask yourself what you wanted to learn but you never gave your own interest enough attention. Is it dancing? or learning a new language?

Whatever it is, just focus on learning it.

Make your alone time = your growth time.

3. Feed Your Brain with Knowledge: Do you know what's the most pathetic lie told to us?

We are manipulated into believing that studying is boring, and people who read books and constantly are in search of learning something new are

'geeks.' Most movies, books, and series paint this idea in our brain that if you are in your 20s, live wildly, get drunk, do stupid things, and blah blah.

The media and entertainment industry have successfully created a belief in our minds that those who study hard in school/college are stupid weird kids who have no means to enjoy life. This is happening intentionally. This whole system is designed carefully. It's not random that most people prefer to get drunk on weekends instead of sitting down with a book in a nice park or library. It's not random. It's designed to make us mentally weak so that we stay a follower, not a leader.

And to top it all, the education system in every country is designed in such a way that we are bound to hate books. Isn't it pathetic how every student is supposed to be good at every subject that some authorities chose for us years ago? And we all are supposed to study hard and prove our intelligence based on our scores in subjects that were forced on us? No wonder why people hate books.

But do you know what's the good thing?

The good thing is you are not in school anymore (I hope) and even if you are in school/college, you can still take the responsibility to feed your brain with the knowledge that you think is important to win big in real life.

School and that strict system are over and as we discussed, you are on your own. **You can choose to read the books that make you feel excited and help you grow in life.**

When my college came to an end, I promised myself that I will never read a book ever again in my life until I am forced to. I simply hated books.

In all three years of my college life and countless years of school, I never found anything worth applying in real life. My degree didn't offer a good job so what was the use? Ugh..books are boring. Why would anyone read them?

Oh wait, that's old Renuka talking.

In 2020 I read my first book. Yes, during lockdown. I was suffering from extreme frustration, mental breakdown, and various other personal and professional life problems. And it was during that time, I read my first book

'The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari' by Robin Sharma. Not only did this book help me see everything clearly, but it also made me fall in love with books. Since then I have read more than 200 books. There was a time when I was addicted to books. One page after another. One book after another. Books became like drugs to me. My college was over. I didn't have professors or anyone else to guide me. And being an extremely underconfident person, I always needed someone to guide me. That's when books helped me. Whatever I needed help with, I would start reading a book on that topic. That's it. Since then, my life has changed in ways I cannot explain to you. And as cliché as it may sound,

"Books are powerful and words hold the power to change your entire life"

I have lived that quote. My life is the epitome of this one quote. Books have transformed me. Books helped me understand myself and the world.

Books helped me feed my brain with the knowledge and wisdom of those who have experienced more than me in life. Books helped me learn from the mistakes of others and learn to be kind and empathetic. Books made me smarter. Books fueled the air of wisdom in me and with every exhale, I became confident and more successful in life.

Books are not boring. Books are magical. They hold the power to transform YOU into your dream version. And most importantly, books are our best friend. They don't leave you like people do. If you read a book, its knowledge is going to be with you forever and during the time of need, it will guide you. That's what you expect from a friend, don't you? You want your best friend to be honest with you. Well, books are honest with you.

They show you the mirror while helping you become better at the

same time.

During the times when I needed someone to guide me, I found the wisdom of books to guide me in every aspect of life.

Stop letting the media fool you. Books are more interesting than you can imagine. Read books of every genre. If you want to learn to live a better life, read self-help books. If you want to learn how to think better, read great philosophers. If you want to become mentally strong, read spiritual books. If you want to spice up your life, read fantasy. If you want to understand humans, read fiction. Books have it all. **Read books and feed your brain**. In your free time, or what you call 'alone time', take out a book and read at least 5 pages. Allow yourself to drown in the pool of

words. Read books on the topics that pique your interest. Read books written by your industry expert and learn what they have learned after spending decades working. Read books written by people who inspire you and make yourself a tiny part of them by consuming their words. Enough of excuses and drama. You have got so much to look forward to. So much to grow and learn. And books are the easiest way to learn and grow in life.

And not only books, dedicate yourself to learning. Make it your goal to feed your brain with knowledge. If not books then go ahead and listen to the podcasts and speeches by your favorite people. Listen to the TedTalk of the people who inspire you. **If there is any topic that piques your curiosity, don't let it die a slow death in your mind. Get up and search about that topic on the Internet. Go on YouTube or Masterclass. The point is to FEED your brain with knowledge, not garbage.** You don't have the time to complain about how people left you. There is so much out there that you need to learn. There are so many topics and books that will make you feel a little more alive. Dedicate your time to that.

Fun Exercise:

To make it a little fun, create a separate folder on your laptop/mobile or buy a separate notebook for everything you learn on your own. Give this folder or notebook the name - **'FEEDING MY MIND'**

Add every little thing you learn in this notebook. If you listen to a podcast/TedTalk, add the summary of it, even if just the bullet points. If there is a topic that you would like to search about, write that topic and schedule a date with your brain and spend time learning about

the topic/concept. If you read a book, write everything you learned and everything you would want to implement in your life. If there is a person who inspires you, create a profile of that person in your notebook. Write the name of the person, add his/her picture, and then write everything you learned about this person. Let this notebook or separate folder be the symbol of your first step toward your transformation. Let this book define that you are ready to grow in life and build your best version.

In the end, I would say, **Don't let time slip from your hands. Educate yourself, train yourself and most of all have fun with yourself.**

Chapter 11 - Become Independent

I am an extremely fun and imaginative person. And I have a bad habit of leaving the sentences incomplete. What I wanted to say was, I am an extremely fun and imaginative person in my mind. I always imagined myself having FUN with my friends especially when I started college. I guess I have always been like this. As soon as I make new friends, I would imagine myself enjoying myself with them, staying overnight, watching a movie together, exploring different cities, and all that stuff that probably makes me sound too desperate.

I remember, when I started college, I had imagined that I would be meeting some amazing friends and we would go out to explore this new city every weekend or maybe we will become a part of the same NGO and other tit-bits from what I had learned from movies. But college was exactly the opposite. For the first few weeks, I wasn't even able to say *'hello'* to anyone without looking at my shoes because I was too shy and underconfident. And when I made friends, we used to stay in our rooms all the time because none of them ever wanted to go out and try anything new.

Something similar happened when I came home after college. I thought I had time to build my career and once I do that, I will travel to all the popular cities of my

country, stay there for a few weeks and make some nice friends for a lifetime. I built my career and started traveling which ended by covering just two cities. Do you know why? *Because the reality wasn't as amazing as I had fantasized about it.*

Though what I realized from my experience is that at all times we expect to have fun with other people. We imagine how we will go out

for a party with our friends and how we will go on a dinner date with our partner and how we will go for a picnic with our family and a few occasional brunch dates with our best friend.

The problem emerges when our fascinating imagination doesn't match our reality. When people forget their brunch with you or cannot make time from their busy schedule to go partying with you or if they don't like to do the same things for fun as you do. And other people are not to be blamed for this. Obviously, they cannot function as per your desires or mood. They have got a life too. **It's not anyone's job to satisfy your desires or manifest your imagination into reality.**

But the desire is there in your heart and someone should pay attention to it. And that someone should be YOU. You cannot bury your desires in your heart just because others didn't acknowledge them.

This chapter is the shortest one because what I want to tell you is a simple truth about adulthood and how you can have fun with yourself. Also, this is the last chapter because what you will learn in this chapter is probably the last thing you will need to find happiness on your own. The one thing that I want you to take with you from this book and the one thing that has helped me over the years is this,

"Do the things that you wanted to do with others"

I always wanted to do one of those sleepovers where all friends come over, we light some candles, create a good environment and arrange comforting food, and watch one of our favorite movies. I used to see this in movies and I imagined it would be fun to do this with my friends. But after college, you don't get to do these things. Everyone becomes an adult with baggage of responsibilities. And these little things stop making sense. No one would want to waste their time doing it. So, I figured, so what if my friends cannot come? I can do this for myself. Whenever I feel super burned out with my work or general life worries, I dim the lights, light a candle, order pasta, make iced coffee and watch a Christmas movie. I am telling you it feels heavenly. I honestly feel like I am no longer a part of the world, *at least for a few hours.*

The bottom line was I had a desire to do a complete movie setup. And I fulfilled that desire. I became independent of my needs. I hold myself accountable for my imagination. Not anyone else. If I had waited for my friends to appear, I would have still been waiting. Besides, not everyone has the luxury to work from anywhere at any time. I have and I understand that my friends don't.

Similarly, I always liked the idea of a picnic. So, once every month, I travel around 40 minutes to get to this place where there is a huge open ground. I go there with my book (or Kindle), and I take my journal as well as my crocheting stuff. I also pack something to eat. Mostly, I take my iced coffee and a doughnut. And do I need to mention how amazing that feels? It feels like real self-care. **I do the things that I desire with myself**.

And if I was your mother, I would push you out of the door to go and do everything that you always wanted but never did because you didn't have an army of people to accompany you.

It's been a long time since you are waiting for others to understand your desires and then turn them into reality. It's time you do everything that you desire with yourself. Plan a dinner date with yourself at the end or start of every month. Take yourself for a coffee date. Click pretty pictures of yourself. Talk to yourself about how your day went or what you did in your day or maybe how you would like to start the next day. Give your room a makeover or write a love letter to yourself that you wanted to receive from others. Buy yourself a flower or better buy a mini plant so it always reminds you that *'you have got your back. '* Gift yourself something special every time you accomplish a big goal, praise yourself, and say it out aloud, *'I am proud of myself.'*

Task: If possible, write an **'I missed myself'** letter to yourself. I know it sounds kind of weird but try it. Write down how you have been missing yourself. Write how you have been ignorant towards yourself and why you will never repeat this mistake. Write how you never did everything you ever wanted and how you will do everything you always wanted to from now on.

Whatever you plan to do, whether it is buying yourself flowers or coffee, do it intentionally and do it romantically. If you decide to go on a dinner date with yourself. Take the effort to look good and put on your favorite dress.

"Romanticize the actions that you take for yourself. Acknowledge your desires and turn them into something better than your imagination. It's all about making an effort for yourself."

Because guess what? The world is like a big dinner party where you are supposed to serve yourself. If you expect people to first put your desired dish on your plate, you will be starved. You wouldn't get to taste what's out there. Everyone is busy serving themselves with what

they think they want to taste. Take this book as a sign to see what's available out there, what you would like to explore, and then go get it yourself. Because as I said, **you are on your own.**

About the Author

I am Renuka Gavrani. I like to write about my experiences and observations in life. I have a mission to make this world a better place for my readers with my words. I just want one thing and that is, when you read my words, you feel understood and loved. I want to make my words feel like a soft kiss. I started writing in 2020 and figured, I am desperately in love with words. My articles have garnished over 2M views till now. I am also an avid reader. I am either writing or reading. If not any of them, then you might find me sleeping or eating. You can also read my first book, "The Wounds of My Words" if you like to read fiction with a mix of life lessons that can touch your heart.

And if you have anything to say to me, you can reach me here: *theartofbeingalone@renukagavrani.com*